

**Annex 2**

**Rownhams House, Rownhams Southampton.**  
**www.rownhamshouse.co.uk**

**Appendix to Premises Licensing Application.**

8<sup>th</sup> April 2009

**Generally:**

*We are attempting to preserve Rownhams House during difficult times and the current recession has worsened an already precarious position. Funds generated by any licensable activity will greatly assist us with many maintenance issues and indeed our survival.*

*We are applying for a Premises Licence for the grounds, the ground floor only of the Main House (although currently this is let as offices) and the ground floor only of the Coach House.*

*Three buildings on the site (which includes a small Ice House that does not appear on the plans) are Listed as being of Historical or Architectural interest; the 12 acres or so of gardens and grounds have many tree and woodland preservation orders and whilst the writer appreciates and supports all these 'constraints' he does ask for a 'fair wind' from readers in order to present and preserve the buildings into the future. We feel that the requested Consent will prove an effective and 'harm free' method of keeping the house and grounds unspoiled for the foreseeable future and allow more members of the community to share what we have. A recently published history of the house has thrown up many fascinating details.*

*Rownhams House has been providing office accommodation for many years; has kept up to date with regard to fire precautions but now needs to slightly expand her repertoire.*

*The house remains suitable for many differing activities but the owner/writer is anxious to retain the 'old' atmosphere. In that respect he is reasonably confident that he knows what activities will sit comfortably within the environment and what will not. He believes that his views are likely to be in tune with responsible and sympathetic local organisations.*

*Kindly note that we shall shortly be applying for a Licence to hold Civil Ceremonies and a reasonably prompt response would be very helpful.*

Plans enclosed.

**1. Plan A** shows the extent of the Rownhams House grounds and those parts for which we apply for a Premises License.

The solid green and yellow lines describe the boundary of Rownhams House and the grounds.

The solid yellow represents the perimeter of the grounds for which we are applying for a Premises Licence. This excludes the area coloured with yellow diagonal lines which is an access way.

The dotted green areas represent lawns / grass.

The pale yellow dotted and brown crossed areas are woodland.

The red diagonal lines represent the Main House and just above is the Coach House.

The two areas marked in bright pink represent the two rooms which we hope to designate mostly for amplified music (see text) and the smaller pink area was the room 'sound tested' (again, please see text.). The other area will be tested when feasible and before it is used for amplified music.

Points A, B, C & D and dotted with pink represent the areas where audibility tests were held.

**2. Plan B.** Plan of entire Main House taken from our Fire Certificate. The plan has been amended to reflect the recommended improvements to our existing fire precautions.

**3. Plan C.** Floor plans of the ground floor of the main house, showing the kitchen and cloakrooms. Please note that only the Principal Rooms, numbered 3,17,22,23,& 24 would be intended for 'licensable activities' but that the smaller rooms ( kitchens, loos etc) would, or could, be available for associated uses: dressing room, registrar's rooms etc.

**4. Plan D** Large Scale plans of the Coach House showing recommended improvements to fire precautions. *Please note that it is only the ground floor for which we are applying for licensable activities.*

5. Also included are two sheets giving explanation of symbols used on Plan B & D.

## Notes to Accompany the Application:

I have applied for a wide use of 'licensable activities': it is difficult to completely anticipate what may 'work' both for us and our local community. Most of the likely uses would be regarded as innocuous by the organisations mentioned below: these activities might include film shows / lectures for special interest groups, safety films for business, Theatre in Education, a performance from a local dance school and/or other activities that would be uncontroversial. Generally I would say that any activities that would alarm neighbours or local authority officers would be highly unlikely to 'suit' the house anyway and it would not be in our interests to stage any type of troublesome event. We are looking at hosting daytime 'corporate events / training days' and whilst we would obviously not be up for offering go-karts, clay pigeon shooting, war games and paintballing, we are looking at croquet lawns and a boules court. I hope this will indicate the *type* of activity that we feel would best suit both the house and the immediate neighbourhood – i.e. quiet, civilised and 'in keeping'.

From speaking with representatives of Test Valley Borough Council Noise Pollution Department, Hampshire Licensing Authority, Mr P Bundy of Nursling and Rownhams Parish Council and Hampshire Police the principal concern seems to be in connection with the risk of 'noise'. The two aspects that have been raised have been: a) people and b) associated noise. I should also like to anticipate another concern with regard to c) traffic.

Weddings, civil ceremonies, receptions and other family events have thus been the focus of my discussions with the organisations above. Clearly the larger the gathering the higher the risk of matters getting out of hand and as such I would propose limiting the number of guests to any one civil function to around 250. We should also be mindful of the type of event we would wish to host and feel that this could be achieved by 'niche marketing'. To emphasise this, our detailed brochures could include wording along the lines of:

"As we are considerate to our neighbourhood we are unable to offer facilities for 18<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday parties or events that may drift over the top. We'd like you to be able to remember us the next morning! We are governed by obligations in respect of our Premises License and to neighbours. Maximum car parking spaces is for around 80 cars. Music must finish by 11pm."

Clearly mid-week ceremonies during our normal office hours would have to be the smaller gatherings both due to parking and out of consideration for our existing office users. They are all sympathetic to the principal that in order to preserve the building we are obliged to seek alternative strategies and it would certainly not be in our interests to alienate them.

**A. People.** Following a suggestion from Hampshire Police we agree it would be wise to prevent drinking in the gardens after 11PM. I have applied for a 15 minute extension on this; although users will be advised that there is an 11PM deadline. This is simply to ensure that we are not tripped up by any straying guests who may have wandered off into the grounds. Any Hire Agreement between us and a User, or a catering service, will make it clear that alcohol cannot be drunk outside the buildings after 11PM. Our first choice catering service are reputable, long established and have a 'no nonsense' policy on alcohol. All their events are attended by an individual with a Personal License. The writer too is a holder of a Personal License and would normally be on site for any relevant event.

We intend to erect notices in appropriate places asking guests to leave quietly and to show consideration to neighbours. We have made contact with a local company with regard to employing SIA certificated doormen, have accepted their costings and where we feel it would assist us in the smooth running of any event, then one or more would be employed for the occasion.

**Noise:** The applicant was once a professional musician and is aware of the problems of sound leakage. It is therefore proposed that any proposed 'live' amplified or recorded music (i.e. discos) would normally be set up indoors; unless the music is connected to an associated open air performance – i.e. play or dance display etc.

As will be seen from the accompanying plan the buildings provide a 'barrier' between the main areas of licensable activities and the closest housing. We also have natural barriers of both trees/woodland and distance in other directions. Outdoor events are more likely in the summer when leaf cover thickens the existing barrier.

As there is possible concern about music leakage we intend to designate one or two rooms for indoor amplified music (see plan) which are both favourable in respect of positioning and would enable us to concentrate any noise reduction strategies on these rooms should they be required.

If necessary we shall install a mobile air conditioning unit for use during the summer months so as to prevent doors/windows from being opened.

We do not however feel that 'acoustic' music, semi-amplified 'jazz' (i.e. Fender Rhodes keyboards) or 'lounge trios' need always to be indoors during the summer months; but we shall carefully monitor performances to ascertain whether they represent a disturbance to nearby housing. Clearly a New Orleans style Jazz band is quite a different proposition to a string quartet; and perhaps a golden wedding party may like a marquee within which to play recordings of Glenn Miller etc. I would ask that we are allowed a generous amount of discretion. Clearly until some experience is gained we should not wish to restrict ourselves unnecessarily but on the other hand the last thing we can afford to do is to annoy neighbours. In any 'hire contract', and sometimes weddings are booked years in advance, we should make it clear that we cannot guarantee to allow music in the gardens. By doing this we should not find ourselves committed to allow something that has already been found to be unsatisfactory.

We should remain sensitive with regard to positioning and would feel comfortable about contacting any booked musicians prior to the event to seek clarification regarding amplification/instrumentation.

We intend to advise our immediate neighbours of a specially designated mobile telephone number so that they can contact us, or the duly appointed Designated Premises Supervisor, during any event. Not only would this reassure our neighbours, but it will allow us to promptly investigate and evaluate any unacceptable sound leakage. *As has already been stated we are more than willing to agree an 11PM deadline for music – both inside and out of doors.*

With regard to amplified groups the writer has conducted a trial using typical rock musicians' 'weapons of choice'. A Stingray electric bass was plugged into a Trace Elliot 150 watt amplifier. Extra bass boost was added to the extent that the sound was more than uncomfortable in the chosen room. A further test was done with a PRS guitar and a Mesa Boogie amplifier at a volume that would have been unacceptably loud to people in this room. The buildings and thick walls shielded the closest houses from any sound and where this was not the case – and yet still inside our tree barrier- the sound was less audible than the background traffic noise. Please see the enclosed plan for audibility and note that the room was empty at the time without people / fittings to 'soak up' the sound.

**On Plan A** – point A – just audible; point B – inaudible; point C indistinct against background traffic; point D – inaudible.

I believe also that as a fellow musician I am in a better position to alert any group to potential problems.

I should also like to observe that should some sound be faintly audible from Rownhams House under specific conditions to nearby housing, we are also subject to noise, barbeques, parties, dogs, radios and garden machinery from neighbours.

**Traffic:** In response to neighbours' previous anxieties about traffic noise brought about by long standing office use, we have already installed fairly fearsome speed bumps. This has proved remarkably unpopular with office tenants but has slowed 'office' traffic down markedly. It has been much welcomed by immediate local residents. The vacant office space has reduced weekly movements substantially both in terms of staff coming and going throughout the day as well as frequent deliveries by vans and larger lorries. Also it is anticipated that evening guests are unlikely to leave all at once and that a gradual drift away from an event will be usual. Notices regarding consideration for neighbours and the presence of SIA staff if required will also contribute to an orderly dispersal.

We have 'well-crushed' (quiet) gravel parking areas and, where closest to neighbours, a normal tarmac drive. Noise from vehicles, together with our 'speed bumps', should be no higher than other estate roads in the immediate vicinity.

May I stress that Rownhams House is within a few hundred yards of both the M27 and the A3057 and the background traffic noise can at times be both significant and intrusive depending upon wind direction – and we are unhappily downwind of the prevailing wind directions.

#### **Other Issues:**

Please note that there are two 'zones' within the interior of Rownhams House for which a Premises Licence is intended.

The ground floor of the Coach House is 'Phase 1' and part of the ground floor of the Main House is 'Phase 2' in that we are expecting an existing office user to vacate by October 2009. We should undertake not to use any 'zone' for a licensable activity until such time as all safeguards etc were in place.

We do not at present have **disabled** lavatories but once the main house becomes 'on stream' we have identified an opportunity to revamp an existing WC, adapted during the 1950s, and which would not prejudice anything of an architectural or historical nature. In the interim we are intending to hire in 'portaloos' (disabled and otherwise) depending upon the requirement of any given occasion.

We have sought a premises licence for most of the grounds. We have done this so as not to rule out any activity which may prove feasible. (i.e. Midsummer Night's Dream around the lake). We have also identified two areas of the grounds that would be suitable for the erection of a marquee for 'outside' dining and/ or for acoustic/ 'light' music. These areas are on the lawns immediately to the south of the main house; and also south of the Coach House partially 'between' the two buildings.

With regard to **Fire Safety** the main house has a Fire Certificate and the Coach House was considered, at the time, exempt due to both numbers and our responsible approach. We do have properly established existing systems in place in respect of alarms, extinguishers and servicing/testing. Nevertheless we have recently undertaken a further Fire Safety Assessment. Additional emergency lighting and signage have been recommended and we are currently working through these and are seeking clarification on a few points. The house is well known to our local fire brigade who carry out rescue drills etc in our cellars.

We intend to liaise with any marquee hire contractors with regard to fire safety, take advice where necessary and will be aware of any risks, i.e. making certain that dried grass cuttings are not in the vicinity. Although there will be a Designated Premises Supervisor on hand during events any Hire Contract will make clear the responsibilities of the hirer and the requirement for them to nominate a responsible individual for purposes of liaison with regard to fire safety.

In respect of our first choice caterers for any event we have seen their recent **food hygiene** inspection report (no action required) as well as their current **£5m public liability insurance**. We too have a £5m public liability insurance in force and a copy of this paperwork is available upon request. We should seek similar reassurance from any other outside caterer. In respect of the Coach House we intend to replace the existing flooring in the service (kitchen/wc/ food layout) areas with an easy clean hard wearing vinyl surface.

*Please note that the existing kitchens in both the main house and the Coach House are small 'office' kitchens and would not be used to prepare food for events – outside caterers will be doing this. The kitchens would be intended for the preparation of Tea/Coffee etc only.*

With regard to external **Health & Safety** issues we intend to prune back shrubs that may impede progress along garden paths, restore over 150 metres of these paths; a failing laburnum tree has been removed (poisonous seeds); strengthen or smooth steps and brick walls and erect warning notices where common sense suggests that there could be an issue. We are taking measures to highlight any 'steps up or down' inside buildings and are providing a hand-hold rail in one particular area.

An easily accessible first aid kit for the appropriate numbers will be provided and signed.

Should it appear that we might approach the '28 day' maximum as designated by **Planning regulations** we should of course submit an Application for a change (or an addition) to our existing use.

Finally may I thank all those individuals and organisations for their time, kindness, guidance and professionalism in what initially has often seemed an impossible mountain to climb. It has been much appreciated.

Roger Barber.