

OBJECTION TO THE APPLICATION FOR AN ALCOHOL LICENCE AT 'SUNDAE CLUB', WAR MEMORIAL PARK, KENILWORTH ROAD, COVENTRY BY COOMBE ABBEY PARK LIMITED

The Friends of the War Memorial Park (The Friends), a community organisation recognised as a charity by HMRC, objects to the application by Coombe Abbey Park Limited for an alcohol licence at two premises within the War Memorial Park

- at the proposed Sundae Club Dessert Diner, adjacent to the Park Visitor Centre
- at the proposed Bistro, adjacent to the Park Tennis Pavilion.

This objection refers to the former.

The War Memorial Park is Coventry's largest public park, and which celebrated its centenary in 2021. The Park is a large 122 acre greenspace with formal gardens, sports pitches, childrens play areas and informal open space. Up to 2019 it attracted an estimated 400,000 visits a year. In the recent pandemic years estimated visits have increased to some 900,000 a year, as the Coventry public has recognised the value and amenity of such a quality greenspace within the city.

The Park was created, partly by public subscription, as a lasting war memorial to honour the 2,600 Coventry men killed in the First World War. It opened in July 1921. The war memorial itself was dedicated in October 1927. Some 678 trees have been planted in the Park in memory of Coventry men and women killed in armed conflict in the past century. The Park is one of only a few parks in England dedicated as a memorial to those fallen in battle. Given this importance the Park has been designated by English Heritage as Grade II and the War Memorial as Grade II*. In recognition of its national significance in 2015 it was one of the first parks to be dedicated, in perpetuity, as a Field in Trust.

In recognition of its history as a war memorial, and the importance of the Park to all sections of society in Coventry, and to prevent anti-social behaviour the City Council has for some years designated and managed the Park as an alcohol-free zone. The Friends support this restriction for the public good. Derogations from this status are given to major events, such as the Godiva Festival. However, for the majority of time the Park is managed with the needs of its wide variety of users of all ages in mind, and thus designated as being alcohol-free.

As noted above, the Friends are committed to the development and management of the Park. In this context we have welcomed the initiative of the Council in seeking new investment in the two cafes in the Park . We have met with the developers/franchisees Coombe Abbey Park Limited and been impressed with the scale of their ambition. In our view, investments in the two cafes will make a significant difference to the quality of the food available within the Park. However, we do take exception to the current application for

an alcohol licence for the 'Sundae Club' cafe (with proposals for indoor and outdoor seating) because, in relation to the City Council's four licensing objectives we object on three grounds to this application:

Prevention of crime and disorder: we fear that crime, disorder or anti-social behavior may result from alcohol being available from 11.00-23.00 hrs every day of the week at the two premises, and in their surrounds near the Visitor Centre. While the licence holder may not generally be held responsible for the conduct of individuals once they leave the premises, and the applicant says he will 'ensure the quiet and orderly departure of guests', it has to be recognised that these premises are situated in the middle of a major public park, used by all sections of the community throughout the day and evening. Moreover, the Visitor Centre is currently a focus of anti-social behaviour in the evenings and during school holidays. How, then, can the location be deemed appropriate when persons are able to leave the premises under the influence of alcohol in the immediate presence of young people and children? How can further anti-social behaviour be avoided? The applicants proposed customer dispersal policy' will only decant their problems into the Park!

Protection of children from harm: Permitting drinking alcohol in a public park in full view of children should not be permitted. It is banned throughout the Park via PSPO. The premises are particularly inappropriate in that at the Visitor Centre access to the public toilets will have to be accessed through rear of the Sundae Club open cafe area. Protection of children by CCTV, as the applicant proposes, is nugatory.

Prevention of public nuisance: The City Council's own park by-law, prohibiting the use of alcohol while in the Park will be compromised through the proposed use of outdoor seating. Though not stated in the applications, from plans we have seen it is intended that there be more outdoor seating than indoor, as the premises have modest indoor floorspace. In our view it will prove impossible for Park staff to 'police' the by-law's prohibition throughout the Park while customers at the outdoor areas of both premises are able to consume alcohol in public view. Council park staff will be placed in an impossible position in relation to controlling who can and cannot drink alcohol.

The applicants seek to open the Sundae Club until 8.00pm. However, the public conveniences in the Park are closed by the Council at 4.30pm daily, even in summer. The Sundae Club has no toilets of its own, relying on those provided to the public immediately adjacent. In these circumstances how will the applicants prevent the occurrence of public nuisance through urination and defecation within the Park in the evenings? How will the applicants ensure that alcoholic beverages are not taken into the public toilets, and who, from the applicants, will be monitoring the public toilets for anti-social behavior during licensing hours?

Additionally, the applicants in the first line of their application refer to an amendment, at consultation stage, to remove the reference to live and recorded music from their application. However they continue to refer to the provision of live and recorded music in their application (Section c, Public Safety). Are they trying to secure the playing of music by stealth?

Taken together, we feel that these three grounds of objection should also be the reason for the Licensing Committee to determine that serving alcohol in the Sundae Club cafe within the War Memorial Park is incompatible with the status of the Park as the city's war memorial and its grade II listed status.

We ask that the licence applications be rejected.

[REDACTED]
Chair,
Friends of The War Memorial Park
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