

# Licensed Property: Noise Control



## Effective Management of Noise from Licensed Premises

Produced by the British Beer & Pub Association

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# Licensed Property: Noise Control

The hospitality industry is vibrant, dynamic and constantly changing to meet the aspirations of consumers. Within this, the pub sector is continually updating and modernising to meet consumer demands.

Pub companies and licensees strive to maintain high standards and levels of professionalism in order to run entertaining and well-ordered outlets to enhance enjoyment for all.

Live entertainment is one such enhancement. However, unwanted sound or nuisance noise from licensed premises can cause complaints.

**Businesses have a statutory duty to control excess noise and failure to do so can lead to prosecution.** Noise control is an essential part of the business. It is achievable through constructing an environment that controls noise and by increasing staff awareness and training so they can assess potential risks and work towards minimising possible disturbances.

This booklet outlines measures to help reduce or control noise disturbance. No one element is likely to work in isolation and so design, technical and management systems are also considered including physical control methods, operational issues and staff involvement.

Some suggestions can be included in refurbishments. Others may be incorporated without a major overhaul. Many of the design elements will relate to new-builds and should be incorporated at the earliest stages of design. It is not expected that all elements will be used, or are even necessary, since each property is unique and very few will lend themselves to every solution detailed here.

The booklet also offers suggestions for management and operational styles, which could help properties that are not planning refurbishment or structural changes to control potential disturbance to neighbours or in-house residents.



**Noise control is good business sense.** Not every premise will create problem noise levels and those that do will vary depending on design and location and the type of entertainment. Pubs, hotels, restaurants and other licensed premises range from several centuries to a few weeks old and everything in between, so there are many reasons why problems may or may not arise.

All possible noise sources should be considered at both the design and operational stages. The following are the types of noise source which should be assessed and which are tackled here:

- Amplified and non-amplified music, singing and speech
- Plant and machinery
- Gardens
- Car parks and other outside areas
- Delivery and collection vehicles

Again, it is unlikely that any one property will need to address all these - maybe only one or two are relevant - but careful consideration here is financially wise as it reduces the chances of failed planning or licensing applications. It also helps prevent subsequent problems with in-house and local residents and ultimately, the local authority. By acting to prevent problems and by tackling them positively if they do arise, your business will benefit now and in the future.



## Noise Control Management

This booklet should help licensees to be aware of, and able to prevent, problems that occur from noise disturbance. If, however, complaints do arise then it will help address them and tackle their cause resulting in:

- A move away from confrontational, complaint-based control to proactive, considerate and neighbour-based control
- Neighbours protected from unacceptable levels of noise

Every business should assess the potential for noise problems in relation to their particular premises and activities. This booklet helps to identify appropriate control measures that, once implemented, should be monitored and reviewed.

Noise assessments should be carried out when necessary e.g:

- On existing un-assessed noise sources
- Prior to launching new entertainment
- When planning alterations
- Before introducing new machinery

Reviews should be undertaken regularly e.g:

- Periodically (e.g. once a year)
- After introducing new sources and/or controls
- Following a complaint
- When monitoring procedures identify that controls are inadequate

Noise control measures and systems for monitoring and reviewing them vary according to what is practical for the size of the business and the nature of the noise source. Assessment can range from simply listening to establish whether a noise is intrusive through to the specialised use of metering equipment. It is important to remember matters such as:

- Nature of noise in or on the property
- Noise heard at the perimeter of the property
- Proximity of noise-sensitive dwellings
- History of any noise complaints from neighbours or local authorities
- All other noise generated in the area from other sources i.e. transport and industry

Companies should consider implementing a noises issues management policy at corporate level. This should include:

- Internal communications, logging and responding to complaints within time limits
- General advice on noise controls with useful details of advisers and suppliers
- Provision of monitoring systems to demonstrate compliance



This system will vary according to what is reasonable given the size of the business and nature of existing or potential problems.

Businesses should ensure appropriate staff training covering:

- Awareness of responsibilities re: logging or responding to complaints
- Internal communication
- Policy relating to liaison with outside agencies
- General advice and instruction relating to the policy and any control measures specific to them.

Possible measures for inclusion in a written noise policy are outlined throughout this booklet.

Sound level meters can help assess if there are noise level problems. However, the person using one must be trained and be able to interpret the results correctly. If trained personnel are unavailable consult the local Environmental Health Officer or an external consultant.

# Location

No two licensed premises are the same and location is the most obvious difference. When thinking about a new-build or refurbishment consider the proposed type of operation, the location and its proximity to neighbours to assess which specific problems may arise or have arisen previously.

Consider the aspects detailed on pages 6 to 9 paying special attention to other properties in the area. Are they residential or business? How close are they to your premises? Research your local area by talking to local residents groups or other local licensees? You may wish to use a specialist noise consultant.

This is equally applicable to those proposing to change the type of entertainment. Your neighbours may be happy for you to offer a barbecue and music in your garden once a week but not every night, for example.

If your property is in a noise-sensitive location consider the acoustic suitability of the proposed or existing premises when deciding which type of operation to run.

Also keep in mind the noise during construction and refurbishment. Building contractors should be made aware of their contractual and statutory obligations.



## Music, Singing and Speech

Common causes of complaint. While the type and volume of the music is acceptable to those on the premises it can be very intrusive to the public. Problems may arise because music levels increase as the event progresses, while noise levels in the external environment may fall. Dance and disco music in particular rely on a bass beat, which can create a booming noise in neighbouring premises.

If noise is coming from outside e.g. a garden party, then it is likely to be louder to neighbours than if it were coming from indoors and this might cause more of a disturbance.

Well-managed pubs in built-up areas need not give rise to noise nuisance, but it is more of an issue than if the pub is in an isolated area.

### How to control this type of noise

- Be sensitive to the needs of local residents and the views of local residents associations
- Advise them of specific events well in advance
- Invite them to attend

If problems occur with this type of noise from inside a building there are several control methods. The most simple and most effective things to remember are:

- Doors should not be opened unnecessarily
- Windows should be kept closed
- Consider changing the room in which the music is played to one where there are fewer windows or air extractors



- Keep the doors and windows of adjacent rooms, such as toilets and corridors, closed especially if they are next to noise sensitive residential properties
- Ventilate the premises by artificial means if possible
- Bedrooms should be away from areas where structure-borne sound can cause disturbance
- Review the type of music
- Reduce bass content
- Review the location, direction and number of speakers
- Install noise-limiting devices to prevent the volume from going above a certain level
- Inform the DJ/musicians/performers of any problems and controls
- If necessary, get a written agreement on any controls that need to be implemented
- Relocate and/or isolate speakers which are adjacent to wall or ceiling mounted extractors
- Mount speakers on rubber or similar material to reduce transmission into the main building structure

**Noise control experts recommend considering:**

- Direction, location and quantifying of speakers
- Non-openable, noise-insulated windows
- Acoustic doors

- Ducted mechanical ventilation, including extract and intake grill silencers
- A full air conditioning (AC) system may be necessary but remember these can also create noise
- Attenuated covers to wall extractors
- For new builds or refurbishments, cavity masonry wall construction or additional acoustic dry-lining treatment with no windows should be applied near any stage or performance area

Also consider a volume regulatory device - such as a noise limiter that prevents noise from going above a certain volume - to all permanent music equipment and all available AC mains power sockets. This should be sited away from the entertainers to prevent it from being overridden. It's best to keep it locked away.

**N.B.** A noise limiter does not always prevent noise problems particularly if the device has to be set so low that a music event is not viable.

**For outdoor events:**

- Point speakers away from the most noise sensitive premises
- Position stages as far away from noise sensitive premises as possible
- Use the screening provided by existing non-sensitive buildings, barriers and natural features
- Provide an effective acoustic screen to boundaries with noise-sensitive premises getting expert advice on what constitutes 'effective'



# Plant and Machinery

Ventilation and AC allow windows and doors to be kept closed which helps control noise. Chiller units, although necessary, can create noise since they usually have large external units, which may be roof-mounted without any kind of shielding. Often they are fan-driven and the fans may cut in and out at random during the day and night. They may also create noise when they are started up or shut down.

**How to control this type of noise**

- For a new-build or refurbishment consider the proper attenuation and siting of plant and machinery to emit the minimum noise levels
- Position them so that the building structure provides as much screening as possible to the nearest noise-sensitive premises
- Machinery should be mounted on anti-vibration mounts and/or provided with an acoustic enclosure or additional acoustic screening where necessary
- It may be necessary to seek the advice of a noise expert regarding siting and/or screening
- Ventilation systems should include extract and intake grille silencers
- Timing clocks may be added to plant and machinery
- With a closed cellar it may be possible to switch off the cooler equipment to reduce noise provided temperature levels are not prejudiced
- Arrange regular maintenance contracts to ensure the smooth functioning of ventilation and other equipment



## Use of Outside Areas

This noise source, usually shouting or loud voices, is likely to be especially noticeable at night, when noise levels in the external environment are relatively low. In most circumstances people arriving at and leaving the premises will not cause any disturbance, but it does happen and must be acknowledged.

It is not only people that cause a disturbance. Their vehicles can also create noise through stereos, slamming doors, revving engines, the horn or screeching tyres for example.

Noise can also arise from beer gardens and play areas.

**How to control this type of noise**

- For new-builds and refurbishments consider the positioning of exits from the building and outside areas such as car parks in relation to noise-sensitive premises.
- Where noise-sensitive premises may overlook the frontage of a licensed premise then an alternative exit-route possibly onto a rear or side street may minimise disturbance.
- Post notices close to exit doors advising that there are residential properties nearby and asking patrons to leave quickly and quietly.
- If music has been playing consider reducing the volume and/or playing slower, more mellow music as the evening draws to a close. This often quietsens people down before they leave.
- For new-builds access roads, car parks and play areas should be kept as far away as possible from noise sensitive properties.
- Natural screening should be used and, where appropriate, screening provided by the premises should be utilised.



- Screening of outside areas by walling or fully boarded fencing can help to control noise from vehicles.
- Consider introducing monitoring devices such as CCTV to outside areas. (Use of CCTV raises a number of issues which are highlighted in the BBPA publication Licensed Property: Security in Design.)

## Delivery/Collection Vehicles

All pubs will have commercial vehicles visiting the premises to deliver goods and remove refuse and that sometimes disturbs neighbours, particularly early in the morning.

*How to control this type of noise*

- At the design stage of a new-build or refurbishment consider the site layout with particular reference to preventing unnecessary noise from vehicles entering and leaving
- Consider means of attenuating such noise e.g. the collection/delivery area might be covered by a lightweight roof that would help to contain the noise and provide a weatherproof area
- Screening
- If frequent deliveries/collections are necessary consider restricting the delivery times as far as possible to those when disturbance would be minimised
- Attempt to limit the number and/or frequency of such activities
- Alternative methods of delivery/collection/loading/unloading

# Responding to a Complaint

Occasionally premises receive complaints about noise. To show due consideration in residential communities it is suggested that the actions below be followed, where applicable to each individual outlet:

- Staff to log and report any complaints to the manager/duty manager
- Where applicable Unit Managers should inform their Area Managers of any complaint and seek their advice
- Where possible seek advice from Head Office specialists in noise control/law enforcement
- On receipt of a complaint and/or where noise-generating events are held the area around the premises should be monitored at the boundaries of the noise-sensitive premises (if known) by the Unit Manager. Do this as the equipment is set up and tested and on several occasions throughout the event.
- Remember, the hearing of someone who has been inside the building may have been affected by raised noise levels making the noise outside seem quieter
- If a noise problem is established, consider the controls throughout the rest of this booklet that might tackle it
- Seek guidance and suggestions from your Local Authority Environmental Health or Environmental Services section

## Further information

For more information on noise control or any other enquiries relating to the management of licensed premises please contact the BBPA directly:

Tel: 020 7627 9191

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