

Before the London Borough of Haringey's

Licensing Sub-Committee

Victoria Stakes

1 Muswell Hill, London N10 3TH

**1st WITNESS STATEMENT OF LEWIS JOHNSON
ON BEHALF OF THE PREMISES LICENCE HOLDER**

1. I am the Chef Patron of Victoria Stakes, 1 Muswell Hill, London N10 3TH (the "Premises"). I have been in post since 14 July 2025. I am a chef by profession having worked in numerous hotels and restaurants, including those recognised by the Michelin Guide. I make this statement in relation my interactions with Ms Oonagh Shiel (the "Applicant") up until the review application was made.

Correspondence with the Applicant

2. When taking the post I was advised by Ms Birke Bassen, the outgoing Operations Manager of Premium Pubs 1 Ltd (the premises licence holder) of ongoing sensitivities with the Applicant. After discussing the ongoing complaints with her and reading emails from the Applicant I could see that there were concerns, predominantly in respect of:
 - construction work;
 - music playing in the backyard;
 - loud events;
 - electrical equipment operating overnight;
 - a fire escape door being left open; and
 - staff noise in the yard after 23.00hrs.

Attached at **exhibit LJ1** is a copy of the correspondence I have seen between Ms Bassen and the Applicant prior to my arrival.

3. I could see that several of the issues raised could be irritants but ones which could easily be overcome with staff training and greater oversight. Anxious to build a positive relationship with the Applicant, I emailed her on 1 August 2025 (see **exhibit LJ2**) to introduce myself and explain that:
 - Noise levels in the backyard were to be recorded five times a day (midday, 17.00hrs, 19.00hrs, 21.00hrs and 22.45hrs).
 - Staff had been reminded to keep the fire escape doors closed during events.
 - The source of overnight noise was being investigated as the Premises had no equipment running when closed.

4. The same day the Applicant emailed me (see **exhibit LJ3**) just before midnight asking when set up for an event the following day would be finished. She complained about lights being on, noise from chairs being scraped along the ground, audible music and vaping. I responded the following morning (see **exhibit LJ4**) explaining that the setup had been completed before 23.00hrs, that I would investigate the allegation of vaping (as the backyard had a no-smoking policy) and the noise concerns. I specifically asked to have a face-to-face meeting at the Applicant's convenience as, from experience, I have found it far more beneficial to discuss problems face-to-face, rather than via email.

5. Rather than providing times for a meeting, the Applicant responded to say that the set-up was not complete by 23.00hrs and still ongoing at 23.56hrs. I replied a couple of hours later (see **exhibit LJ5**) to say that I had left the Premises at 23.45hrs and, at that time, the backyard was clear. The only explanation I could think of was the rubbish being taken out at the front of the Premises. I repeated the commitment to monitor sound levels and advised that there was a wedding in the backyard during the day with the upstairs dining room being used by the wedding party in the evening. Again, I reiterated my availability to speak in person. That night I emailed the Applicant the meter readings for the day (see **exhibit LJ6**) and explained that:
 - The backyard was closed from 22.00hrs to guests.

- The lights of the backyard were switched off by 23.15hrs.
 - The kitchen door was closed early.
 - Live music inside ceased at 23.30hrs.
 - All remaining music was turned off at 23.42hrs.
6. The Applicant responded the following evening (see **exhibit LJ7**) asking what noise monitoring equipment was being used because, in her opinion, the music playing in the backyard was 'extremely loud'.
 7. On 4 August 2025 both in the morning and evening, the Applicant emailed me (see **exhibit LJ8**) to complain about construction work. Replying the following morning and including Ms Catlin Galster (another resident who had emailed me) (see **exhibit LJ9**) I explained that the works were specifically to address the fan/extraction noise. By this stage I was becoming increasingly concerned that I had still not met the Applicant in person and that, only two weeks into the job, I had insufficient time to address all the issues raised. Again, I asked to meet the Applicant in person (also see **exhibit LJ9**). There was no reply to this request.
 8. The next contact from the Applicant was almost two weeks later. On 16 August 2025 she emailed me (see **exhibit LJ10**) to complain about microphone testing, shouting and music, explaining that it was difficult to work from home. She also explained that she preferred to keep communicating in writing (see **exhibit LJ11**). I found this frustrating and replied that preparation for an outside event had been done in the afternoon to avoid any sleep disruption with microphone testing outside for speeches and a live band playing in the upstairs room (see **exhibit LJ12**). I repeated the steps that I had already taken, namely closing the backyard sooner than advertised and reminding staff to minimise disruption and noise. My fear was that, without a meeting, there was nothing I could do to satisfy her concerns. I again asked if we could meet and I offered to bring a witness to make notes. I explained that I was going to be moving into the flat next to the Premises to personally monitor and manage the areas of concern.
 9. I had no response from the Applicant to my email of 16 August 2025. On 3 September 2025 (see **exhibit LJ13**) I emailed the Applicant to explain that the Premises would be using a Temporary Event Notice ('TEN') and hence the backyard was going to remain open until 00.45hrs on the Friday and Saturday evening. This was a miscommunication on my part as I was unaware the TEN was for inside the Premises only, so guests were moved inside by

23:00hrs. Two days later she replied (see **exhibit LJ14**) saying that the noise levels were excessive and that she was recorded decibel levels in the 90s. I replied the following day (see **exhibit LJ15**) saying that I had reviewed the decibel levels which were recorded at 70. These recordings were taken at the front of the Applicant's property with our decibel monitor. Her response was that she had recorded levels over 90 decibels and that she had spoken with a member of staff called Tonya who had confirmed that the party organisers were controlling the music and that she had asked the organisers to turn the music down (see **exhibit LJ16**). The Applicant asked me to confirm what steps I was putting in place to prevent any further noise disruption. From this point onwards we made bookings aware they would need to connect their playlist through the Premises' Spotify account and hence they now have no control over the volume as this could only be done from inside the Premises on our reservations tablet.

10. During the early hours on 24 September 2025 (see **exhibit LJ17**) the Applicant contacted me to say that lights in the backyard had been kept on and flooding her property with light preventing her from sleeping. I did not see the email until the following morning because I had been away in Cornwall, but I apologised and explained that I would address with staff on my return. Twelve minutes later she replied saying that the lights were still on.
11. Having not heard from the Applicant for some time she emailed me on 10 October 2025 (see **exhibit LJ18**) attaching a recording of what she could hear, specifically complaining about the wedding speeches. I responded the following day stating that the speeches began at approximately 18.30hrs and lasted for approximately 30 minutes and that the recorded sound levels did not exceed 70 decibels. I also attached the recording sheet that I had personally prepared and offered to meet once more.
12. On 17 October 2025 (see **exhibit LJ19**) the Applicant welcomed my decision to move the portable speaker used for speeches to the other side of the backyard saying that it had made a big difference and saying that she was happy to meet. I was extremely heartened by this news and, at the time, thought this was a key turning point in our relationship. I did not reply to this email as we passed each other on the street and she again thanked me for the change.
13. The Applicant had a similar issue a few weeks later in respect of light pollution and emailed late on 4 November 2025 (see **exhibit LJ20**) to ask that the lights in the backyard are switched

off. I replied the following morning saying that I was out of the country, but I had informed the team. Since then, I have been informed that the Applicant had taken photos of myself inside the Premises dropping cases off on my return. I was still on annual leave at this time.

14. My final email from the Applicant was on 14 November 2025 (see **exhibit LJ21**) when she emailed me about a man climbing over the fence from the Premises. We saw each other that morning and, at her request, I showed her the CCTV footage. It shows the man climbing over the fence from her side onto the Premises' property. Our side of the fence is secured each night with a chain and lock.

Conclusion

15. Throughout my dealings with the Applicant, my team and I have endeavoured to communicate in a helpful and expeditious manner, doing our best to resolve any of her concerns. I accept that occasional mistakes have been made, such as forgetting to turn off the outside lights and failing to notify the Applicant of pending construction works. That said, I strongly believe that any issues could have been handled more effectively if the Applicant had agreed to meet with me. For example, we could have then undertaken joint sound recordings and discussed other possible steps.
16. As explained above, I now live above the Premises (I am its nearest neighbour). Despite my proximity and the fact that I suffer from sleep apnoea, I have never been disturbed by noise or light, even during busy periods and events. I do not accept the allegations made in respect of the playing of music in the backyard. There is a solitary fixed speaker in the backyard through which music is played. In my opinion, the music played outside through this speaker is incidental only and hence not regulated. There is a separate portable speaker connected to a microphone for wedding speeches. Since complaints were received this portable speaker is now only positioned at the end of the backyard furthest away from the Applicant's property (see above).
17. That said, I have reflected on the steps that the Premises can take unilaterally. Since receipt of the review application, I can confirm that:

- The festoon lights have been changed to dimmer, warmer lights and placed on a timer that automatically switches them off at 23:00hrs.
- I have been in regular contact with my waste collection company and had an additional general waste and glass bin delivered. I am also working out how to get a Sunday collection as well.
- I have added signage and advised staff that the stairs are emergency exit only and no smoking at the point, to keep the door clear of debris. This is explained to anyone booking an event in the dining room. They are also told this at the setup of their event and told that all windows must be completely closed by 22.00hrs. The window facing the yard is not to be open if music is being played.
- Cleaners have been informed not to clean the backyard before 8am.
- I have also installed two additional signs, one at the backyard entrance and one on the opposite side of the Premises, asking patrons to keep noise levels to a minimum whenever they are outside.

In addition, I note several new licensing conditions have been proffered which both confirm the above and go further to ensure that the licensing objectives are upheld.

18. I will be attending the hearing on 15 January 2026 to further assist the sub-committee.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed:

Lewis Johnson

Dated: 6/1/25