

Licensing@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

15 September 2017

Dear Sir or Madam

Licensing application WK/201710885, Vue Cinema, 168-176 Eltham High Street, London SE9 1BJ.

I am writing to set out my concerns regarding aspects of the licensing application submitted by Vue Cinema in relation to their new cinema in Eltham High Street, scheduled to open next year.

I believe that the cinemas licence should only allow:

- **The cinema to operate only until midnight Sunday to Friday, in line with other local cinemas such as the Picture House in Greenwich**
- **That it only operate until 01:00 on Friday and Saturday which strikes a balance between the needs of the cinema and the local community.**
- **That its application for 25 other week-night late openings is rejected and the cinema instead applies for temporary licences should they wish to put on special events**

Eltham High Street is an unusual retail centre in that it is very closely surrounded by residential areas. Having so many potential customers living within easy reach of the High Street is clearly an advantage for traders but it does mean that we always need to strike a careful balance between the needs of local businesses and the impact this will have on local residents.

The Vue cinema is a welcome and exciting addition to the High Street and I very much look forward to its opening. However, like every other town-centre business its operators must take into account the views of local people.

I arranged two public meetings where local residents have had the opportunity to come and hear about Vue's plans for the cinema but also to let Vue know about their reservations. Both meetings were packed which is a testament to the seriousness of local people's concerns.

These concerns related primarily to worries about the impact that the cinema would have on parking in and around the High Street and possible nuisance caused by customers leaving the cinema in the early hours of the morning.

After the first meeting in March this year I asked that Vue withdraw its licence application to enable further dialogue to take place with residents. I was very grateful when they agreed to this and to attend my second meeting which was held in July this year, which was again standing-room only.

Vue have subsequently made a fresh application and I am writing to explain why I feel that this application is not acceptable as it stands and that some changes need to be made.

The new application is asking for the cinema to be open and selling alcohol from the early morning to 00.30 the following day from Sunday to Thursday, and then until 03:00 the following day on Fridays and Saturdays. On top of this it also requests permission to open until 03:00 on 25 occasions a year – with the only stipulation that they give the Council 72 hours notice.

I would like to see these hours changed. Local residents are understandably concerned about the adverse impact and potential nuisance caused by people leaving the cinema after 00:30 on week nights. **I would like to see this brought back to midnight to help address this problem.** This would bring the cinema into line with the licence granted to Greenwich Picture House in Greenwich High Road which is also located close to residential areas and is only allowed to operate until 00.00.

Similar arguments apply to the proposals for late night opening on Friday and Saturday. I understand the need for later openings on these nights but the request for permission to open until 03:00 is excessive. **I would strongly recommend that the cinema be granted a licence only until 01:00 on Friday and Saturday which I believe strikes a reasonable balance between the needs of the cinema and the local community.**

In regards to the application to be allowed to open and sell alcohol until 03:00 on 25 occasions each year, I believe the Council should reject this outright. Instead, the cinema operators should apply for temporary licences if they wish to open later during the week for special occasions, whether that is for film premieres, coverage of sporting events or any other reason.

It is my experience that once licences are granted it is rare for them to be curtailed in the future. I believe therefore that it is reasonable to ask Vue to prove that the impact on local residents will not be significant should they be granted permission to open late. Making them apply for temporary licences will give residents a chance to have their views heard on each particular application. Should the residents' concerns about the impact that such events will have on them be allayed then the operators could look to revisit this application at a later date.

However, should Vue be granted their current application for 25 late night openings a year and this does impact adversely on the quality of life for local residents, then the reality is that it will be much more difficult for the conditions of their licence to be changed.

As I said at the beginning of my letter I welcome the imminent arrival of the cinema to Eltham town centre. I am sure that the proposals I have set out above will mean that this development will be a success for both residents and the cinema operators.

Thank you for giving this matter your attention.

Yours sincerely

Clive Efford