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Your guide to
applying for a
premises licence



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Your guide to applying for a premises licence

Businesses that sell alcohol or provide entertainment must have a premises licence that allows certain 'licensable activities' to go ahead. The licence will dictate trading hours, where you can sell alcohol from and the trading activities you are restricted to, including the sale of alcohol as well as the provision of regulated entertainment (such as live and recorded music) and late-night refreshment (meaning selling hot drink between 11pm and 5am). Obtaining and keeping the right licence is vital to many businesses and once you have one it is valid indefinitely. It can, however, be lost at a premises licence review hearing, and securing a variation is also subject to a public consultation period in which objections can be made. Whether you're starting a new operation or need help with an existing licensed business, here are our top tips for navigating what can be an unpredictably tricky process.

1. Consider consultees and potential objections

A poorly written premises licence application, which is subject to a public consultation period, can attract representations from vocal members of the public and powerful residents' associations. Adverse objections can trigger the need for your application to be dealt with at a public license committee meeting.

The trick here is to consider the closest residents and other businesses who could be affected by a large beer garden or louder events. Early engagement could win you new customers and prevent objections at every new variation application you make - consider holding a public meeting showing architects drawings, menus and proposed events schedules.

2. Know your Local Licensing authority

An application for a premises licence has to be made to the relevant licensing authority, which is usually the local council in whose area the premises are situated. Negotiation with your local licensing authority, by presenting drafts and seeking pre-application advice is an important method of avoiding a licensing committee. Statutory consultees such as police, the fire service, environmental health and the licensing department can in our experience.

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Local authorities must publish a statement of their licensing policy every five years, which sets out the factors and priorities it is looking for in applications. Having due regard to the policy in proposed licence conditions will demonstrate that your business respects the objectives and protections it aims to achieve.

3. Take draft conditions seriously

A premises licence will be granted on the applicant's terms unless representations are made to the licensing authority by interested parties such as local residents, the police, or environmental health bodies.

Where relevant representations are made, the authority must hold a hearing. Applications must therefore include an operating schedule in a prescribed form which sets out the proposed licensable activities, when they will take place, and other operating details. The holder of the licence, or anyone who has made relevant representations in relation to it, can appeal to a magistrates' court against any conditions that are imposed by the licensing authority at such a hearing.

Otherwise, licence applications must be accompanied by a set of conditions that you must live by when it is implemented, governing how you intend to operate.

Common conditions such as a 'challenge 21/25' policy, use of CCTV and staff training are common. Further conditions bespoke to your business should be drawn up with day to day practicalities in mind. For example, if a local authority requires a Noise Management Plan, you may need to consider how to carry out regular noise checks from the closest residential properties.

4. Consider growth plans

Making changes to an existing licence requires a variation application, which are also subject to scrutiny by the public and local authority. It is a good idea to pre-empt your businesses' growth plans in the initial application - will you install a courtyard bar, start hosting live music or a pop-up food truck in the car park of your premises?

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It is important to strike a balance between planning for future growth stages, without alarming the local authority from the outset, before you have proven yourself to be a respectful and compliant operation. A Temporary Event Notice can cater for shorter events that are outside the scope of a licence.

5. Maintain local relationships

After a licence is granted, any person is allowed to bring review against it, at any time - whether it's a local resident, the police, licensing authority, environmental health officer, even the Home Office Immigration Department or Trading Standards.

Maintaining healthy relationships with neighbours is crucial to avoid this, by consulting on growth plans and how different events and operations are received locally.

Seeking early legal advice in the licence application process will help to minimise the risk of having it dealt with by a licensing committee and having to make multiple variations as your business grows.



Would you like to know more?

The Thrings Commercial Property team specialises in potential licensee's or the owner of commercial premises, timely and expert advice on licensing matters and invaluable support, [click here to find out more](#).