

Dreamland licence application
Summary: Noise conditions

Dreamland is a celebrated live music champion contributing significantly to Margate's overall tourism strategy.

Practical support for the leisure & tourism sector has never been more critical. Granting consent for this licence supports a sector devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic, live venue closures, economic recession, inflation, supply chain friction and cross-border obstacles.

The proposed concert and event programme brings regional and national recognition plus significant social, cultural, and economic benefits.

The social value cannot be understated. People experience civic pride when major national & international artists can be heard performing in their town.

Live music gatherings affect how places are perceived and people's relationships with their place of residence, making them feel connected to it. It encourages people to contribute more towards the social fabric and care more for the local environment. Dreamland events act as vehicles to bring people together, encouraging social contact and leading to enhanced individual well-being and more resilient communities.

Dreamland contributes to Margate's established soundscape as Great Britain's oldest-surviving amusement attraction. Since reopening in June 2015, the venue, management team & critical audience demand has successfully re-energised this iconic destination. From a heritage presenting legendary artists, including The Who & Rolling Stones, Dreamland continues to deliver positive cultural & economic value, despite challenging headwinds.

Over the last 7 & a half years, Dreamland has upheld a positive record of delivering a high-quality experience while successfully protecting the community, minimising the likelihood of noise disturbance and complaint.

The comparatively low complaint incidence can be attributed to robust noise control combined with the positive social-economic influence described above. While noise complaints in England have increased by 54% since the lockdown (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, March 2022), the minimal change in Dreamland noise complaints is a positive indication that the incumbent Music Noise Levels are unlikely to cause a disturbance.

Despite welcome agreement on most conditions, the remaining differences are not viable with the objectives of this licence application.

The noise exposure controls proposed by TDC Environmental Health do not appear to consider the qualitative nature of the apparent noise impact in the context of a busy seaside resort. The proposed limitations on the number of events and curfew time are unsustainable obstacles to attracting high-quality national and international artists.

Our proposal adequately mitigates the noise exposure trilemma.

1. The exposure repetition is inherently limited by permitting a maximum of 48 outdoor event days per year, adequately mitigating excessive cumulative impact. Increasing the number of events is reasonable, given the robust noise control scheme in combination with the duration and intensity restrictions.
2. The duration & timing is controlled, limiting noise exposure. The outdoor events are scheduled during social hours. Most music events are evening concerts of short duration instead of all-day events. Indoor event duration is not a significant factor, given that noise emission does not adversely impact the community. We are confident the break-out is adequately contained by the building shell, provided the external doors & windows remain closed.
3. The sound intensity is limited to acceptable levels. The incumbent Music Noise Levels are proven effective, adequately balancing the audience's needs while protecting the community. The parameters in the proposal are based on current practice, established guidelines and extensive empirical evidence. We are confident the apparent impact does not cause Public Nuisance. From over seven years' experience with large music events at Dreamland, the complaints have not been excessive. Where the music has triggered private nuisance complaints, the small number of individuals involved indicates the disturbance is isolated & of marginal adverse impact.

Outdoors:

As a responsible operator, Dreamland is not seeking a sound level increase above the incumbent conditions, simply an increase in the number of events already at the lowest practical intensity.

The guidance document used in the UK to control music noise at events is the Noise Council, Code of Practice on Environmental Noise Control at Concerts, 1995 (Pop Code). Research undertaken in 2006 (Griffiths & Staunton, 2006) suggested that the guidance would benefit from further refinements to the noise levels, the number of concerts and the categories used. While the Pop Code is currently the guidance document in the UK, deviation from this guidance is typical, and it has largely been superseded by legislation, particularly the Licensing Act 2003. A survey conducted in 2020 (P.Wheeler et al.) found 80 different music noise limits in a sample of 71 outdoor venues. The forthcoming Pop Code revision currently under review by the CIEH emphasises the need for local context & discretion.

These findings are relevant to Dreamland in 2023.

The Music Noise Level at Railway Terrace and Arlington House from a concert on the Scenic Stage is around 30dB lower than the music level experienced by the audience. For context, a difference of 10dB is perceived as a doubling or halving in loudness. A 30dB difference is like an 8-fold reduction. The average listener generally considers a difference of less than 3dB undetectable.

The current Music Noise Level (MNL) limit of 65dB LAeq 15' at Railway Terrace and Arlington House corresponds to a music level of around 95dBA for the audience.

The Pop Code states that music levels for the audience of around 100dBA is normal, and below 95dBA is unlikely to provide satisfactory entertainment.

Consequently, Dreamland is currently operating with the lowest viable conditions for concerts, i.e., a 65dB LAeq 15' environmental limit, 30dB below the audience experience. TDC's proposal to reduce this lower limit below 65dBA is not practical or compatible with music events. Audiences will not attend, and artists will not perform at lower levels.

We shall simultaneously measure the dB LCEq sound level with dB LAeq for bass-beat or low-frequency mitigation. Unlike LAeq, which effectively ignores low-frequencies, LCEq measures the whole tonal range, including the bass. The previous method of measuring two lower octave bands has limitations that may underestimate the bass emissions from Dreamland. dBC is available on most sound meters, is already extensively used in Noise at Work assessment, and is rapidly becoming the de-facto standard for low-frequency control in Regulated Entertainment.

Indoors:

There are no material changes to the proposed indoor operation. The Music Noise Level emissions are controlled to have no adverse impact inside dwellings.

The prevailing soundscape is highly variable in any seafront location. Significant uncertainty is attached to a measurement in windy conditions where the sound meter cannot distinguish between wind and music noise.

TDC has proposed a limit covering an indiscernible change in eighteen measurement parameters relative to a highly variable underlying value. This is not practicable for TDC or Dreamland. The inherent uncertainty in the measured values makes it challenging to have confidence in compliance monitoring.

Dreamland has proposed a simple, robust scheme to protect the community from noise disturbance. The Music Noise shall not exceed a fixed level that would be intrusive in people's homes as far as can be reasonably determined. By referencing the British Standard Code of Practice for Sound Insulation in Buildings (BS8233 2014), we can be confident that a level not exceeding 55dBA before 23:00 and 45dBA, Leq 15' when assessment at the façade of any residential dwelling is likely to be acceptable inside.

For coordination with the Outdoor controls, we propose to monitor & limit low-frequency emissions using the LCEq parameter in parallel with LAeq.