



# **Code of Practice and Guidance Notes on Noise Control for Concerts and Similar Outdoor Events.**

**Environmental Development  
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## **Introduction**

1. These Guidance Notes have been produced to assist the organisers of concerts and similar open air events in making their entertainment run smoothly for the benefit of those attending whilst ensuring unreasonable disturbance is not caused to local residents.

## **Licensing Act 2003**

2. The premises or site will either have a Premises Licence or a Temporary Event notice issued under the Licensing Act 2003. Temporary Event notices will only apply to events for less than 500 people. The Premises Licence will have conditions attached covering all the licensable activities e.g. sale of alcohol, provision of entertainment that can take place at the premises or site. Some or all of the following conditions will be attached to the licence:
  - a. The Premises Licence Holder shall notify the Licensing Authority and Responsible Authority for Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) of the selected date for the concert or event at least three months in advance of the event.
  - b. Each concert or event shall be subject to an individual noise risk assessment in accordance with the current and relevant Oxford City Council Code of Practice and Guidance on Noise Control at concerts and similar events. The assessment shall be submitted to the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health three months in advance of the event.
  - c. At least one month before the concert or event the Premises Licence Holder will invite licensing officers and representatives of the relevant responsible authorities to discuss the concert or event.
  - d. Residents in the immediate vicinity shall be notified two weeks in advance by means of a suitable leaflet giving the date and times of the concert or event and a telephone number and contact person to whom complaints can be referred.
  - e. Some or all of the following noise conditions shall apply to all concerts or events: (See section on noise conditions for details).

The Responsible Authority for Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) shall decide which conditions will apply, and the hours and noise levels to be set based on the noise risk assessment for the concert or event:
  - f. No fireworks or other pyrotechnics shall be used other than with the prior written consent of the Licensing Authority.
3. It is an offence not to comply with the conditions on the Premises Licence. You will need to check the conditions on the Licence for the premises or site and ensure they are complied with at all times during the event.

## **Liaison with Environmental Health**

4. The Premises Licence Holder should inform the Environmental Health Department of the date of the concert or event as soon as possible (three months before the event or sooner) by completing and submitting the attached application form. The completed application form should be sent to the 'Responsible Authority – Environmental Protection, Environmental

Development, St Aldates Chambers, 109 St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1DS  
(Telephone Oxford 249811 or email [noise@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:noise@oxford.gov.uk))

5. A schedule of events listing the times of the bands, DJ's and any other music, including the location within the premises or site, and the type of music etc. should be provided to the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health Officer as soon as reasonably possible (see attached Noise Risk Assessment form).
6. A plan of the premises or site, to a scale of 1:500 (or a scale which shows all locations where music will be played), marked with the locations and dimensions of the stages, marquees, generators and other temporary structures to be used during the event, should also be provided.
7. The Officers from the department are ready to discuss with organisers the nature and location of entertainment of the event at as early a stage as possible, with the aim of helping the Organisers to promote a successful and safe concert or event that does not disturb residents.
8. At least one month before the concert or event the Premises Licence Holder (or organisers) will invite licensing officers and representatives of the relevant responsible authorities to discuss the event (see paragraph 2c above).

### **Public Relations**

9. This is perhaps one of the most effective ways in which organisers can ensure that things run smoothly and that complaints are minimised.
10. A brief note should be delivered to noise sensitive premises around the site, telling residents when and where the concert or event is to take place, asking for their tolerance, advising of the precautions being taken against disturbance and giving a telephone number where someone responsible can be contacted in case of problems (see paragraph 2d above)
11. Experience has shown that where people are aware of what is to take place and how to contact someone if there are any difficulties than very few people feel the need to make an official complaint
12. It is important on your risk assessment that you identify the noise sensitive locations, and take appropriate precautions to minimise disturbance in these areas.

### **Fireworks**

13. No fireworks or other pyrotechnics shall be used other than with the prior written consent of the Licensing Authority (see paragraph 2f above). If approved fireworks or other noisy aerial displays must not occur after 2300 hours as required by the Firework Regulations 2004. To minimise disturbance to local residents around the premises or site displays should be as short as possible, with the minimum use of loud explosive fireworks.

### **Bands and live music**

14. The amplification of most bands consists of amplifiers and speakers for the instruments and vocalists. The sound is mixed and balanced by a Sound Engineer at a sound desk prior to the performance. The use of noise limiters/compressors are advised for the main stage as this sets a maximum volume for the music. It is also important to set maximum levels for the low

frequency levels (bass) as these cause the most disturbance to local residents. Seek advice from the sound engineer you employ.

15. In order that the performers can be aware of the sound around them, a "backline" of speakers is positioned on stage. This is not controlled by the sound desk and it is essential, therefore, that the Sound Engineer is made fully aware of the necessary restrictions on sound levels and so is in a position to set up the backline to enable full control to be exercised during the performance. Organisers should satisfy themselves that the levels are set accordingly. This is especially important, since when the performance is taking place the sound desk will be in control of only about 15-20% of the total volume of sound produced.
16. One of the most frequently encountered problems is that an unnecessarily large amount of sound equipment is provided, which makes effective control very difficult. The output of the sound system(s) should be suitable for the size of the event, and as a general rule it should be calculated on the basis of 1KW per 100 people in the audience expected.
17. It is important that bands booked to appear should be aware of the need to be sensitive to potential noise problems and should accept restrictions that may be imposed. In some cases verbal assurances have been proven quite inadequate and organisers are strongly advised to include suitable clauses in contracts so as to ensure that they retain effective control over sound levels.
18. An advantage of using a single production company to run a particular stage is that the sound engineer may be the same for all bands and this makes liaison much more straightforward.
19. Where more than one entertainment venue is proposed they should be spread throughout the premises or site. Simultaneous performances should be held at different places as to minimise the likelihood of large crowds being drawn to one place. It will also avoid music from one sound system interfering with another and possibly of noise levels being increased as a result. There should be a conscious effort to use quieter entertainment at the end of the concert event. Sensitive sites should be for non-amplified music and only early in the programme.
20. It is always difficult to keep the programme running to schedule. Bands take longer than expected to set up or fail to arrive on time and slippage frequently takes place. Organisers should make sure that sufficient change over time is allowed between bands.

### **Sound Systems**

21. Employ a sound system whenever possible that uses circuit speakers (i.e., a range of relatively low powered speakers sited around the premises or site marquee rather than one with a bank of speakers either side of the stage to force sound out over the whole audience). Ensure that the sound engineer strictly controls the low frequency levels of the music, as this causes the most disturbance to local residents.
22. Ensure, when booking a sound engineer that they fully understand the need to work within restrictions imposed and is prepared to accept direction from the Premises Licence Holder, Organiser, or Responsible Authority regarding sound levels. You are recommended to draw up a suitable contract giving the

Premises Licence Holder, Organiser, or Responsible Authority full control over the location of speakers and sound levels.

### **Noise Risk Assessment**

23. A Noise Risk Assessment is required for all concerts and similar outdoor events (see paragraph 2b above). The assessment will include a noise survey to determine the background noise level at locations around the site, representative of the noise sensitive premises likely to experience the highest noise level.
24. Organisers will need to demonstrate in the assessment that the location of all external stages and marquees where music is to be played has been planned so as to minimise their impact on the noise sensitive premises identified.
25. Organisers will need to demonstrate in the Noise Risk Assessment that the programme of events for stages and marquees where music is to be played has been planned so as to minimise the impact on the noise sensitive premises identified.
26. Any measures to mitigate the noise levels from the music sources must also be considered in the Noise Risk Assessment for example the use of delay or circuit speakers, and compressors or limiters on the sound system.
27. The attached Noise Risk Assessment form must be completed and submitted as part of the application. It is suggested that the form is completed in consultation with the sound company supplying the equipment.

### **Noise Conditions**

28. Some or all of the following noise conditions shall apply to all concerts or events. The Responsible Authority for Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) shall decide which conditions will apply, and the \*hours and \*noise levels to be set, based on the noise risk assessment for the concert or event.
  - a. All amplified music in an outside marquee or in the open air shall finish no later than (\*) hours.
  - b. Rehearsals and sound checks are permitted only between the following hours: (\*) hours to (\*) hours.
  - c. Music from the concert or event is permitted only between the following hours: (\*) hours to (\*) hours.
  - d. Music from other sources (e.g. food traders, fairground rides) is permitted only between the following hours: (\*) hours to (\*) hours.
  - e. The control limits set at the mixer position shall be adequate to ensure that the Music Noise Level shall not at any noise sensitive premises exceed [*(\*)dB(A) over a fifteen minute period / the background noise level by 15dB(A) over a fifteen minute period*] throughout the duration of the concert or event.
  - f. The control limits set at the mixer position shall be adequate to ensure that the Music Noise Level shall not at any noise sensitive premises exceed [*(\*)dB(A) over a fifteen minute period / the background noise level by 15dB(A) over a fifteen minute period*] throughout the duration of the concert or event.
  - g. The control limits set at the mixer position shall be adequate to ensure that the Music Noise Level shall not at any noise sensitive premises exceed [*(\*)dB(A) over a fifteen minute period / the background noise level by 15dB(A)*]

*over a fifteen minute period*] throughout the duration of any rehearsal or sound check for the concert or event.

- h. The control limits set at the mixer position shall be adequate to ensure that the Music Noise Level shall not at any noise sensitive premises exceed [*(\*)dB over a fifteen minute period / the background noise level by (\*)dB over a fifteen minute period in the 63Hz and 125Hz octave frequency bands*] throughout the duration of the concert or event.
- i. The control limits set at the mixer position shall be adequate to ensure that the Music Noise Level shall not at any noise sensitive premises exceed [*(\*)dB over a fifteen minute period / the background noise level by (\*)dB over a fifteen minute period in the 63Hz and 125Hz octave frequency bands*] throughout the duration of any rehearsal or sound check for the concert or event.
- j. The Event Organiser shall have full control over the sound amplification equipment and the volume shall be adjusted according to the requirements of the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health (Environmental Protection).
- k. The Event Organiser shall ensure that all persons (including individual sound engineers) involved with the sound system are informed of the sound control limits and that any instructions from the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) regarding noise levels are complied with.
- l. Unrestricted access to the front of house position and backstage areas shall be allowed at all times to the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) for the purpose of sound level measurements, communications with the nominated noise consultant / sound engineer and monitoring licence conditions.
- m. All complaints about noise received by the site office / event organiser shall be logged, and shall be notified to the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) within [*\*five*] minutes of the complaint being received.
- n. The Event Organiser shall effect full control over traders or other organisations on site where there is amplified music being played. At the request of the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health (Environmental Protection) the Event Organiser shall arrange for the volume to be reduced or the playing to cease, or if necessary the equipment to be confiscated.

## **Monitoring**

- 29. Officers from the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health Department will normally monitor such events. They should receive co-operation from the Premises Licence Holder or Organisers in charge of the entertainment when carrying out monitoring inspections. They will monitor the event to ensure that no unreasonable disturbance is being caused, no statutory nuisance is being created and the conditions on the Premises Licence are being complied with.
- 30. A Premise Licence Holder or a member of the organisers or a designated person shall be responsible for monitoring the noise level/and any noise complaints received regarding the event. The noise level should be monitored

throughout the duration of the event and any advice/or instruction given by the Environmental Health Officer shall be complied with.

31. An inspection will normally be made before the start of the concert or event to check on the general organisation and layout, with further inspections during the course of the event will be carried out during the course of the event. An Officer(s) may request a reduction in sound levels if they are satisfied that it is necessary for compliance with the noise conditions set preventing unreasonable disturbance. The propagation of sound is frequently complex and may be affected by atmospheric conditions. There are occasions when sound levels (especially low frequency music) appear to be relatively low close to the source but are still intrusive some considerable distance away.
32. Organisers should not rely solely on the Environmental Health Officers to advise them of noise problems. When possible the organisers should monitor noise levels at noise sensitive premises around the premises or site to assess whether noise is likely to be disturbing.

### **Fairground Rides, Bouncing Castles etc.**

33. Fairground rides must not be sited in noise sensitive areas and sirens and loud music must be controlled to a level agreed with the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health.
34. All diesel generators/plant must be sited wherever possible away from noise sensitive areas or be sound proofed to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority for Environmental Health.

### **Food Safety**

35. If food traders will be on the premises or site you are advised to contact and seek advice from the Business Regulation Team of Environmental Development at an early date. Telephone Oxford 249811 or email [foodsafety@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:foodsafety@oxford.gov.uk)

## Application for an Event (Information Required by Environmental Health)

1. Name and Address of premises/site

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 .....

2. Date of the Event: .....Maximum Numbers:.....

3. Start Time:.....Finish Time:.....

4. Names, Duties and Telephone Numbers of the Premises Licence Holder/Organiser.

Name	Duties	Tel Number

(ensure that the person responsible for the control of noise during the event is identified)

5. Name : Premises Licence Holder/Organisers in charge of the event.

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6. Plan of the premises/site to a scale of 1:500 attached:      Yes/No

(plan to show the locations of all music areas/fairground rides and dimensions of marquees and other temporary structures to be used during the event)

7. Details of the Sound Engineer or Production Company to be Employed

Name:.....

Address:.....

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.....Tel Number:.....

8. Has the attached Noise Risk Assessment form been completed:      Yes/No



9. Will Fairground Rides and Similar Attractions be Provided: Yes/No

If Yes Give the Details of the Company Supplying the Attractions

Name:.....

Address:.....

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.....Tel Number:.....

10. Have you contacted the Food Safety section of Environmental Health regarding catering and food traders for the event: Yes/No

11. Details of the electrician who will be checking the electrical installations at the event.

Name:.....

Address:.....

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.....Tel Number:.....

(NB All electrical installations, generators and equipment used as part of the event including those traders should comply with the current edition of the Regulations for Electrical Installations issued by the Institute of Electrical Engineers, and any other relevant British Standards and HSE guidance where applicable)

1. Signed:.....

2. Signed:.....

Print Name:.....

(Premises Licence holder  
as named in 5 above)

Print Name: .....

(Organiser of Event  
as named 5 above)

Date:.....

Date:.....

The completed application form should be sent to:

**Responsible Authority – Environmental Protection  
Environmental Development  
St Aldates Chamber  
109 St Aldates  
Oxford  
OX1 1DS**

Please make sure the following are enclosed:

- Itinerary of bands and music (required as soon as possible before the event)
- Completed Noise Risk Assessment form
- Scale plan showing the premises/site to be used.

**Noise Risk Assessment Form**

(Separate form to be completed for each noise source)

Name of premises/site.....

Location of the Sound System(s):.....

Expected Audience Capacity:.....

Entertainment to be provided e.g. band or sound system:.....  
(Attach a full itinerary including times)

Noise sensitive premises that may be affected

Address	Distance from Source (m)

(Continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Type and size of the sound system (include details of how calculated):

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Sound system set up (e.g. number and position of delay / circuit speakers, compressors / limiters etc.):

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