

Environmental Noise: non-infrastructure

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Apex Acoustics

Nightclub soundscape approach

This project demonstrates how a soundscape approach can lead to improved outcomes for all parties. A conventional approach would have entailed supporting the nightclub owners with a confrontational approach to the local authority, who were suggesting very onerous noise escape limits. These were not practically achievable, and threatened the continuing operation of the newly refurbished nightclub. A soundscape approach, consulting the local residents on their concerns over the night time sound environment in the round rather than focussing on a single complainant or issue, enabled very different outcomes:

- The local authority having confidence that they were doing enough to protect residents without being excessively cautious;
- The nightclub avoiding excessive remodelling works implied by the original local authority criterion for noise escape;
- Nightclub low frequency sound reduced to the NANR45 curve in the resident's flat by trimming the bass levels;
- Identification and action on other sources of night time sound annoyance, such as mitigation of noise from people queueing to enter venues.

This application of a soundscape approach, in a highly contentious context, led to improved outcomes for all parties. It can be replicated in many other situations to find collaborative solutions to noise problems. Rather than relying on the complaints to inform the response, the consultants chose to engage more widely with the people affected, to understand their perception of the soundscape, and the problems in context.

The judges were impressed by how the positive engagement with residents had enabled a successful outcome for all parties. The consultants had managed expectations and come up with a solution that avoided the need for major building works and sound insulation treatment by taking a brave and different approach of engaging with all the residents. The use of a soundscape questionnaire on a project of this size is unusual and so goes beyond existing good practice but gave the client confidence to engage with the neighbours. It would have been easy to rely on noise complaints to inform the approach but this could have had a detrimental impact

on the venue. Instead a solution was found that helps the night-time economy to operate in a mixed use area and so delivered good value to the client.

The nightclub director said: *"Apex Acoustics approach has been a complete game changer, and will really help us work more closely with residents and council in the future"*

