

Draft London Strategic Licensing Policy 2026–31

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1. About this document

1.1 What is the London Strategic Licensing Policy?

1.1.1 The London Strategic Licensing Policy sets out the Mayor's vision for licensing across the city. It defines what good practice and consistency should look like. It also explains how the Mayor and London's licensing authorities, responsible authorities, and applicants will work together to create a fair, safe, and inclusive system. It outlines how licensing should support economic growth, hospitality, culture, nightlife, and events, while:

- Promoting the statutory objectives in the [Licensing Act 2003](#)
- Protecting Londoners
- Strengthening well-managed town centres and high streets.

1.1.2 The policy aims to make licensing more transparent and consistent across London's licensing authorities and to better align it with the London Growth Plan, the Mayor's London Plan, and the needs of London's 24-hour economy.

1.1.3 The policy is adopted under new powers to be granted to the Mayor by the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (as proposed to be amended by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill). The policy is implemented as part of the London Strategic Licensing Pilot (see Appendix 2). These changes are part of a national review into how the UK's licensing system can be improved, enabling responsible businesses to grow, adapt and thrive while protecting communities.

1.1.4 The pilot aims to start in Summer 2026 and the GLA intends to review it after 2 years. The pilot will test the impact of:

- The measures and powers to be introduced into the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (as proposed to be amended by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill) (see section 4.2, below).
- Working with London licensing authorities and responsible authorities to improve consistency in how licensing data is collected and evaluated, and to scope how data collection, transparency, and sharing can be improved across London to support better decision-making.
- Providing guidance, training, and support through a non-statutory and regularly updated London Licensing Playbook. This will help London licensing authorities, responsible authorities, and businesses undertaking

licensing activity apply the London Strategic Licensing Policy and share best practice as it develops.

1.1.5 The detailed procedure for, and practical approach to, exercising the measures and powers to be introduced into the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (as proposed to be amended by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill) are expected to be set out in secondary legislation. Operational guidance for London licensing authorities on how they are expected to engage with and implement this policy will be issued once this secondary legislation has been enacted.

1.1.6 The proposed amendment of the [Licensing Act 2003](#) requires the Mayor to set a policy for Greater London on carrying out ‘relevant licensable activities’ – defined as selling alcohol via retail, providing regulated entertainment, and late-night refreshments. However, the Mayor does not currently intend to alter arrangements for premises selling alcohol (via retail) that will primarily be consumed off the premises. These include off-licences, supermarkets, convenience stores, and other retail outlets primarily selling alcohol for takeaway.

1.1.7 In the meantime – consistent with the recently published [National Licensing Policy Framework](#) – the London Strategic Licensing Policy applies exclusively to premises primarily authorised (under the [Licensing Act 2003](#)) to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises, and those providing regulated entertainment or late-night refreshment. This includes, but is not limited to, pubs, bars, restaurants, nightlife spaces, cafés, beer gardens, hotels, festivals, and events.

1.1.8 Other premises outside this policy’s scope include:

- Those with club premises certificates (which principally supply alcohol to members in organisations formed for social, sporting, or political purposes).
- Those benefitting from the issue of temporary event notices (TENs) (which authorise the use of premises to carry out licensable activities for up to 168 hours).

This policy also excludes:

- Licences issued under the Gambling Act 2005.
- Sexual Entertainment Venue licences issued under Schedule 3 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982.

1.1.9 This policy reflects, and is designed to sit within, the existing national statutory framework, including:

- The [Licensing Act 2003](#)
- The [Revised Guidance issued under section 182 by the Secretary of State](#)

- The [National Licensing Policy Framework](#)

It adopts the same enabling, proportionate, and evidence-led approach, while setting out where London's scale, strategic priorities, and opportunities require extra coordination to support growth, safety, and well-managed places.

1.1.10 London-specific strategic aims, principles, and priorities set out in this policy are informed by a range of evidence, including evidence from the recently published London Nightlife Taskforce report and other evidence available on the [London Datastore](#).

1.2 Why London needs a Strategic Licensing Policy

1.2.1 London is one of the best places in the world to live, work, and play. Nightlife businesses generate spending and jobs – supporting London's position as a 24-hour city and boosting the UK economy. Yet the current approach to licensing is inconsistent and costly, and it increases spatial and demographic inequalities across London. Other cities have responded to these challenges with a more strategic approach. New York City, Tokyo, and New South Wales (Sydney), for example, are adopting far more strategic and effective licensing approaches to boost their cultural offer and night-time economies.

1.2.2 Many applicants report that the costs of obtaining and maintaining a licence can be significant, especially for small and independent businesses. Research for the [Business Friendly Licensing Project](#) found that licensing hearings, complex processes, duplicated requirements, and uncertainty in decision-making increase time and costs for applicants and London licensing authorities.

1.2.3 Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and those owned and operated by individuals with protected characteristics, are affected disproportionately by the current system. A report titled [Barriers faced by underrepresented groups in securing and sustaining community-led and cultural spaces in London](#) shows that operators in London (particularly those serving younger, diverse, or grassroots audiences) often report differential treatment and disproportionate scrutiny. Music Venues Trust also identifies the value and precarious nature of grassroots music venues in the wider sector.

1.2.4 The current system also stifles innovation, discouraging businesses from adopting creative and novel business models. Since the pandemic, businesses in the nightlife sector are increasingly adopting flexible, multi-purpose models – operating as a pub one day, a restaurant the next, and hosting club nights or cultural events on other occasions. Traditional licensing approaches often struggle to accommodate these mixed-use approaches.

1.2.5 Consumer trends and insights from the nightlife sector show a decline in alcohol consumption among nightlife-goers, alongside the growing popularity of no- and low-alcohol alternatives and experience-based socialising. This provides opportunities for forming new social connections and experience-based offers, and for businesses to diversify and innovate. Businesses need the flexibility to evolve and invest – in their premises, programming, and service models – and a licensing system that supports innovation while maintaining public health and safety.

1.2.6 The contribution that responsible licensed premises can play in protecting health and supporting healthy communities is not widely recognised. According to the [UK Institute of Alcohol Studies](#), about 70 per cent of alcohol in the UK is sold 'off-trade', where it is cheaper. A study by [Holmes et al.](#) also found that, in the UK,

most heavy drinking happens on occasions involving only unsupervised, off-trade consumption. By providing a more diverse offer after dark, and regulated environments, responsible licensed premises can encourage social interaction that is not centred solely on alcohol.

1.2.7 Licensing also has the potential to play a far greater role in increasing actual and perceived safety. Evidence from [the Portas Review](#) and [Centre for London](#) shows that empty shopfronts and inactive ground floors are linked to vandalism, anti-social behaviour and reduced community confidence. Unlocking vacant premises for temporary or permanent activity can support natural surveillance, deter crime, strengthen a sense of belonging, and boost footfall – yet this opportunity often goes unrealised. According to research by the [24-Hour Cities Network](#) and the [World Economic Forum](#), cities operating effectively at all hours tend to be safer; more inclusive; and more attractive to investment and tourism.

1.2.8 Flexibility of closing times – to meet local needs, and enable a more even and sustainable pattern of activity across the 24-hour cycle – also [reflects the intent of the Licensing Act 2003](#), which sought to avoid problems historically associated with a narrow range of closing hours. The London Assembly report [Rewrite the night: the future of London's night time economy](#) (2018) found that staggered closing times can reduce congestion, and improve safety, by spreading the times at which people leave spaces.

1.2.9 By acknowledging the social value that licensed venues provide, the licensing system can also contribute to improved health and wellbeing outcomes, by reducing social isolation. A report by the [World Health Organization](#) highlights that social isolation and loneliness are associated with poorer physical health, mental health and even mortality. [Data After Dark](#) (2025), a University College London report supported by the Mayor of London, also showed the inequalities faced by the 1.32 million people working in London between 6pm and 6am (including access to healthy and affordable food), with significant consequences for their physical and mental health. This shows the importance of providing services, food and facilities that support workers and visitors outside traditional working hours.

1.2.10 Licensing data in London is frequently inconsistent and fragmented in format. Differences in what data is collected, and how frequently it is updated, result in uneven practices across the capital. Access to registers also varies significantly between local authorities; some provide online access, while others require formal requests or in-person visits. These inconsistencies in data content, maintenance and accessibility undermine efforts to develop a comprehensive and reliable picture of licensing activity across the city; and, in turn, limit effective policy development and oversight.

1.2.11 A strategic view is essential when considering licensing against London-wide patterns of activity, movement and demand, rather than in isolation. A new approach will add a strategic overview and voice for London. It will guide, and bring more consistency to, the 33 local licensing policies and services run by London's local authorities. This will help identify structural barriers; reduce duplication; and support more consistent decision-making, while maintaining public safety and community confidence. Growing challenges and new opportunities need a city-wide strategy – giving rise to a licensing system that:

- boosts London's position as a leading global city
- works effectively for a city operating across different times and places
- supports its businesses and communities alike.

2. Legal status

2.1 Legal status and how this policy should be applied

2.1.1 This London Strategic Licensing Policy has statutory status under the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (as proposed to be amended by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill). London licensing authorities, responsible authorities and other persons must have regard to:

- the [Licensing Act 2003](#)
- the [Revised Guidance issued under section 182 by the Secretary of State](#)
- this London Strategic Licensing Policy
- the relevant local Statement of Licensing Policy.

2.1.2 In line with the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (as proposed to be amended by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill), the London Strategic Licensing Policy has been developed. This recognises:

- the primary importance of promoting the statutory licensing objectives
- any requirements imposed on London licensing authorities when carrying out their licensing functions
- any cumulative impact assessments published by a London licensing authority in accordance with section 5A of the [Licensing Act 2003](#).

2.1.3 This policy should be read alongside the London Licensing Playbook, when available. This document provides standards, guidance and data to support consistent, proportionate decision-making, processes and practices.

2.1.4 An [Equality Impact Assessment \(EqIA\)](#) has informed, and will continue to inform, this policy. It should be read as part of the statutory package informing consultation and final adoption.

2.2 Territorial extent

2.2.1 This policy applies to all 32 London boroughs, the City of London Corporation, the Sub-Treasurer of the Inner Temple and the Under-Treasurer of the Middle Temple.

2.3 Integration with the Licensing Act 2003

2.3.1 The [Licensing Act 2003](#) sets out four statutory objectives that underpin all licensing decisions. Each objective carries equal weight and should, when engaged, guide every licensing decision accordingly. They are:

- prevention of crime and disorder
- public safety
- prevention of public nuisance
- protection of children from harm.

2.3.2 The 2003 Act is clear that promoting the four licensing objectives is paramount at all times. [Revised Guidance issued under section 182 by the Secretary of State](#) in November 2025 identifies several other key aims, purposes and principles that are vitally important for those involved in licensing.

2.3.3 London licensing authorities should have regard to the aims, principles and purposes set out in the [Revised Guidance issued under section 182 by the Secretary of State](#). They should align their approach with relevant local strategies, including those relating to economic growth, crime prevention, transport, tourism, equality and culture. The Guidance is also now supplemented by the non-statutory [National Licensing Policy Framework](#), which observes that licensing must support broader ambitions as well:

- business investment and growth
- high street revival
- businesses supporting rural communities
- festivals and events
- local jobs
- community cohesion.

At the same time, London licensing authorities should also consider how licensing policies and decisions support, and are generally conform with, the Mayor's London Plan and the London Growth Plan, which set out London-wide priorities for spatial development, investment, regeneration and public safety.

2.3.4 Evidence from London and other major cities shows that thriving hospitality, nightlife, culture and events can support the four licensing objectives. Well-managed spaces, businesses and events help create safer streets by increasing footfall; bringing life to underused areas; and improving natural surveillance. They bring communities together, encourage responsible business practices and strengthen local partnerships to ensure that issues and concerns are addressed early.

2.3.5 These outcomes show that economic vitality, and promoting the licensing objectives, are not in conflict. When licensing is planned and managed strategically, then growth, creativity and safety reinforce one another to deliver social and economic benefits for Londoners.

2.3.6 Coordinating strategies across multiple statutory regimes and locations is a complex process. Like the [National Licensing Policy Framework](#), this policy does not displace London licensing authorities' existing duties – although it does outline key pan-London principles and priorities that they must have regard to. Subject to those matters, each London licensing authority will retain full discretion to determine each application based on its individual circumstances and merits.

2.3.7 In the case of any demonstrable conflict between the provisions in this policy and any legal requirement set out in the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (or regulations made thereunder), London licensing authorities should continue to abide by the duties and responsibilities under the law.

3. Our strategy

3.1 The London Growth Plan

3.1.1 The [London Growth Plan](#) sets out a plan to accelerate growth, and to create an economy that works for all Londoners – making our city more equal as well as more prosperous. To create and shape that growth, we need to build from our exceptionally strong foundations

3.1.2 London is one of the world's few truly global cities: a place where international commerce, culture and communities come together and make each other stronger.

3.1.3 London is one of the most diverse places on the planet. There are more than 300 languages spoken in London. 40 per cent of Londoners were born outside the UK and nearly half of all Londoners identify as Black, Asian, Mixed or Other.²

3.1.4 London's culture, diverse neighbourhoods, food and drink, nightlife, green spaces and great universities are a magnet for the best talent in the world. The same exceptional London experience draws millions of global visitors. Many rankings rate London as the best city, or one of the top three cities, in the world. It holds the number one spot for the 2025 Best Cities ranking; and the 2025 Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Award for the Best of the Best Destinations.³

3.1.5 The hospitality industry contributes around £17 billion a year to London's economy (gross value added); and the creative industries contribute approximately £64 billion ([ONS/DCMS](#), 2025). Revenue in the hospitality sector is estimated to have reached £46 billion in 2023, surpassing pre-pandemic levels ([UKHospitality](#), 2024).

3.1.6 London also hosts some of the world's most significant cultural, sporting and ceremonial events. These events help attract further visitors and maintain London's position as one of the world's most visited cities as well as supporting Londoners to build meaningful relationships with each other, be active in their communities and reduce inequalities.

3.1.7 International business events are crucial for establishing cities as global hubs for specialist expertise, generating approximately £33.6 billion nationally. In 2023 and 2024, 62 per cent of all inbound business visits to the UK were to London. This is complemented by London Fashion Week, which positions the UK as a creative powerhouse and provides a vital marketplace for SME design businesses; and a live music scene that accounts for a third of all UK concert income. Major sports events are key employers for the hospitality, accommodation, catering and retail industries. In 2024, London successfully hosted over 50 major sports events and league finals, with six of the highest-profile sporting competitions globally⁴ generating £230 million in direct economic impact and attracting 480,000 spectators.⁵

3.1.8 The [London Growth Plan](#) identifies the experience economy (culture, events, sports, attractions, retail and hospitality) as one of the city's key strengths and growth sectors. London's experience economy is globally competitive, and a very significant economic contributor.

3.1.9 London's night-time economy is one of the most significant in the world. It supports over 1 million workers; and sustains hospitality, retail, culture, logistics, transport and essential services. The GLA's [London at Night: An Updated Evidence Base for a 24 Hour City \(2024\)](#) showed that London's £520 billion economy is "active around the clock". It contributes billions to London's productivity and global competitiveness.

3.1.10 London's nightlife economy – a subset of the larger night-time economy – enables flexible employment, supports tourism, and strengthens the city's cultural identity. A GLA Economics analysis found a clear positive correlation between the number of licensed premises, job creation and, by extension, economic activity and growth across London boroughs ([GLA Economics](#), 2025). The night-time and nightlife economies are therefore a fundamental part of London's economic and social infrastructure.

3.2 The strategic role of licensing in London

3.2.1 To support the experience and nightlife sectors, we need to make them able to invest and adapt – so that they can provide the services that Londoners and visitors want, need and deserve. These sectors’ growth also relies on local places – whether in the city centre or local high streets – to feel safe and clean, with well-designed and maintained public spaces.

3.2.2 Licensing plays a vital role in supporting safe day and night-time environments; and ensuring that spaces operate responsibly, and contribute positively to London’s economic growth. We want hospitality, leisure and cultural spaces to provide well-managed environments for Londoners to socialise, while supporting safer and more vibrant high streets. We also want these businesses to generate employment; and offer inclusive spaces for communities to come together. In this way, they can strengthen social cohesion; and contribute to mental and physical health.

3.2.3 To achieve this, this policy aims to create a licensing system that is flexible and responsive to the evolving needs of Londoners; visitors; and hospitality, culture and leisure businesses. By adopting a city-wide approach, we want to enable the adoption of best practices and standards that support London licensing authorities in their role; address inconsistencies; and improve transparency and efficiency in licensing decision-making. We also want a system that is accessible to a diverse range of operators; and can help to reduce unnecessary costs and bureaucracy for businesses.

3.2.4 Licensing is also a powerful tool to drive innovation, regeneration and investment into the city. To that end, the Mayor’s ambition is to use licensing as a strategic lever to advance the following city-wide ambitions:

- strengthen London’s world-class experience and nightlife sectors, and our world-leading major events – these underpin our long-term competitiveness to attract global talent, investors and visitors
- boost business resilience and growth by ensuring the system is proportionate, evidence-based, inclusive and responsive – giving responsible operators the flexibility to diversify their offer and invest in innovation
- enable investment and regeneration by:
 - supporting vibrant, mixed-use areas
 - promoting night-time economic activity in strategically important areas, including the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) and town centres
 - revitalising high streets and making them safer, which is essential to attract more investment into housing and commercial developments
- enhance cultural and community life by facilitating live music, theatre, dancing, major sports events, and other forms of entertainment that enrich London’s identity
- support a range of spaces and experiences that meet the needs of Londoners and visitors – including the availability of low and no-alcohol options; and more inclusive, safer spaces that are enjoyable for all.

3.2.5 Equally, growth cannot – and must not – come at the expense of Londoners’ health and safety. Responsible licensed premises play a critical role in protecting health, and supporting healthy communities, by providing appropriately regulated environments. Responsible on-licensed premises contribute to reducing excessive alcohol consumption; and preventing injuries or risky behaviours caused by intoxication. As Londoners’ preferences continue to evolve, we want to work with London licensing authorities in supporting businesses to offer more health-conscious options, and respond to the marked shift away from alcohol-centric socialising toward more inclusive, diverse, experience-led activities.

3.2.6 The Mayor of London cannot achieve these ambitions alone – it will need a strong partnership with the UK government, local authorities, responsible authorities, businesses, investors and residents. This strategy is about how we can, collectively, shape a licensing system that delivers on our shared ambitions now and into the future.

3.3 Licensing as part of a wider toolkit for Good Growth

3.3.1 This policy forms part of a broader framework of policies that support growth that is socially and economically inclusive, as well as environmentally sustainable. The London Strategic Licensing Policy will work in conjunction with the following policies, which are essential to achieve the objectives of this licensing policy:

- the [London Growth Plan](#)
- the [London Plan](#)
- the [Culture Strategy for London](#)
- the [Mayor's Police and Crime Plan 2025-29](#)
- the forthcoming Mayor's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy
- the [Health Inequalities Strategy 2018-28](#)
- the [Mayor's Transport Strategy](#)
- the [Inclusive Talent Strategy](#).

3.3.2 The London Strategic Licensing Policy will build on the work of the [London Nightlife Taskforce](#). It will draw on the evidence base underpinning its report, which highlights the challenges and opportunities facing London's nightlife.

3.3.3 This policy is intended to help create a licensing system that feels simpler, fairer and more predictable for everyone who interacts with it. For businesses, it should mean clearer processes, increased accessibility, proportionate requirements, faster decisions, and greater confidence to invest and innovate. For London licensing authorities and police, it should enable better partnership, more consistent decision-making, earlier engagement to resolve issues and fewer unnecessary hearings. For boroughs, it should mean more investment potential and commercial attractiveness for regeneration and place-making. For residents, it should provide better access to information; more transparent reasoning behind decisions; and stronger avenues for mediation before conflict escalates. Overall, Londoners should feel the impact through safer, more vibrant high streets; greater diversity of places to socialise; and a night-time environment that reflects and serves their needs across the 24-hour cycle.

4. The Mayor's role in the licensing system

4.1 The Mayor's strategic role

4.1.1 The Mayor will provide strategic leadership to promote a fair, transparent, efficient and evidence-led licensing system. The Mayor will serve as a central point of coordination – ensuring that local and city-wide priorities are balanced; and that stakeholders can collaborate effectively and share best practices.

4.1.2 This policy is intended to promote and support strong local decision-making. Licensing authorities will continue to act as the primary decision-makers on licensing applications, reflecting the Mayor's commitment to uphold local autonomy and expertise. In keeping with this approach, the Mayor's involvement will focus on licensing applications deemed to be of strategic importance for London, according to specific and transparent criteria (as set out in section 4.3.4 and Appendix 3). This ensures that the Mayor's intervention is focused, proportionate and aligned with the wider strategic priorities for the city.

4.1.3 To deliver on this strategic role, the Mayor will seek to:

- promote the aims, principles and priorities set out in this policy
- establish standards to be adopted across local authorities to increase safety; support economic growth; and reduce unnecessary costs and bureaucracy for businesses
- work with partners (including London licensing authorities and responsible authorities) to improve consistency in how licensing data is collected and evaluated; and develop a uniform approach to sharing data across London
- provide guidance, training and support to those involved in licensing, to help implement the London Strategic Licensing Policy – this will improve the quality of licensing applications, and strengthening the delivery of statutory licensing functions.

4.2 Licensing powers granted to the Mayor

4.2.1 New legislation is expected to give the Mayor a formal role in licensing, through the following measures to be introduced into the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (as proposed to be amended by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill):

- Powers granted to the Mayor to set a London-wide Strategic Licensing Policy; and duties on London licensing authorities to have regard to it under section 4(4) of the Act in carrying out their licensing functions, alongside their own current licensing policy and the [Revised Guidance issued under section 182 by the Secretary of State](#).
- Requirements for London licensing authorities to consult the Mayor when determining or revising their own statement of licensing policy. This ensures that the Mayor has an opportunity to provide strategic views; and that these will be considered.
- Adding the GLA as a responsible authority.
- Introducing a discretionary power for the Mayor to determine licence applications (for granting or varying a premises licence) of strategic importance after a licensing authority has made its decision.

4.2.2 These measures depend on legislative changes that are currently subject to Parliamentary approval; and secondary legislation to be laid throughout 2026. They will not take effect until the relevant Bill has successfully completed all Parliamentary stages and received Royal Assent, thereby becoming law.

4.2.3 It is expected that, through secondary legislation, the Secretary of State will prescribe the definition of ‘applications of potential strategic importance’; and establish regulations governing the procedures for exercising these powers.

4.3 Implementing the Mayor’s licensing powers

4.3.1 When preparing or revising a draft Statement of Licensing Policy, London licensing authorities must consult the Mayor and provide an opportunity for the Mayor to comment. This aims to ensure that local policies reflect local priorities and contexts, while remaining aligned with London-wide strategic priorities. The Mayor will work with London licensing authorities to identify opportunities for consistency with the London Strategic Licensing Policy; the London Plan; the London Growth Plan; and wider Mayoral strategies. London licensing authorities should explain in their Statement of Licensing Policy how they have had regard to the Mayor’s feedback.

4.3.2 The GLA can make representations on applications for the grant or variation of any application, under the authorisations specified in Part 3 of the [Licensing Act 2003](#). It can also make representations during review and summary review processes relating to those authorisations; submit evidence; and participate in hearings, where necessary, to protect London-wide strategic priorities in relation to one or more of the licensing objectives. All existing procedures for notifying responsible authorities of new applications, including information-sharing arrangements, shall also apply to the GLA. In exercising its role as a responsible authority, the GLA would aim to support early engagement; encourage proportionate outcomes; and strengthen partnership working. In doing so, it will avoid overlapping with the licensing functions of London licensing authorities.

4.3.3 The Mayor may, at their discretion, call in and determine licence applications (for grant or to vary a premises licence) of strategic importance after an individual London licensing authority has reached its decision. This power aims to ensure that licensing applications of strategic importance are evidence-based, proportionate and in line with London-wide Mayoral priorities. Decisions will still need to be in line with the four objectives of the [Licensing Act 2003](#). Routine decisions will remain at borough level; and it is intended that the Mayor's call-in power will be used sparingly. In exercising such a power, the Mayor will comply with the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (as amended); and have regard to this London Strategic Licensing Policy, and the promotion of the licensing objectives.

4.3.4 The Mayor may determine that a licensing application is of strategic importance, and therefore eligible for call-in, if it is likely to have an impact that extends beyond a single premises or neighbourhood – thus affecting London's economy, locations of strategic significance, or its reputation as a global city. The application must, in the Mayor's opinion, meet the indicative criteria set out in Appendix 3; and be capable of being of strategic importance to the promotion of the licensing objectives in the [Licensing Act 2003](#).

4.3.5 Provisions in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill are intended to provide the Secretary of State with the power to define, in secondary legislation, “applications of potential strategic importance”, which is a key aspect of the scope of the Mayor's call-in power. The final criteria will be subject to further policy decisions and legislation from the government, which will ultimately determine the types of application that the Mayor may choose to call in and issue a direction on. Appendix 3 sets out a proposal on how these potential criteria (i.e., economic impact, location of strategic importance, and reputational importance), if provided for, could be applied in a London context, noting that they remain subject to change.”

4.3.6 The GLA's role of responsible authority, and the Mayor's power to determine applications of strategic importance, are two distinct responsibilities. To mitigate any potential conflicts of interest, the following safeguards will apply:

- Separation of roles within the GLA, to ensure impartiality in representations and call-in processes. This can be done by adopting arrangements similar to those used by London licensing teams (e.g., the officer responsible for making representations must not be the same officer responsible for decision-making on the same case).
- Policies to ensure that the Mayor's call-in power would be exercised as a last resort.
- All decisions determined in exercise of the call-in power shall be evidence-based.
- Statutory rights of appeal are not diminished, but have been modified accordingly.

4.3.7 Any Mayor's decision to call in applications, and decisions on applications that have been called in, would be supported by information shared by local authorities. The GLA would expect this information to be similar or identical to information shared with the GLA once appointed as a responsible authority; but the legal basis for sharing is allowing the Mayor to exercise call-in powers in an evidence-based way. Further information on transparency data and evaluation is presented in section 8, below.

4.4 Support for London licensing authorities and applicants

4.4.1 To help London licensing authorities apply this policy consistently – and to improve and encourage best practice from licensing applicants, boroughs and responsible authorities – the GLA will work with key stakeholders to develop and coordinate the London Licensing Playbook.

4.4.2 The Playbook will provide strategic policy guidance, tools, standardised frameworks and templates to: facilitate more consistent approaches across boroughs; and clarify, for the business sector, what is considered best practice for the city. The aim is to establish, for all stakeholders involved in licensing, what standardised practices should look like. This will help to raise the standards across London; and make them more consistent and fairer. The Playbook will be supported by training to London licensing authorities, responsible authorities and applicants.

4.4.3 The GLA expects and encourages each London licensing authority to engage in the process of developing and enacting the Playbook. This will ensure London benefits from a more consistent licensing system that is fair, proportionate, pro-growth and pro-safety.

4.4.4 The GLA will also work with London licensing authorities to improve data collection and transparency, to support evidence-based decision-making.

5. Five principles of decision-making when promoting the licensing objectives

5.1 About the principles

5.1.1 These principles are intended to:

- guide decision-making
- improve clarity for applicants and residents
- promote a culture of constructive partnership between London licensing authorities, responsible authorities and businesses.

The principles establish a common understanding of what good licensing practice looks like.

5.1.2 The principles apply to all stages of the licensing process, including policy development; pre-application engagement; hearings; and enforcement. They should be read alongside the London Licensing Playbook, when available. This provides guidance, examples and tools to support delivery of these principles.

5.2 Licensing decisions must be evidence-led, proportionate and reasonable, avoiding unnecessary costs and burdens

5.2.1 Licensing decisions promoting the licensing objectives must be based on clear, relevant, up-to-date and cogent evidence. London licensing authorities should use available data to inform local policies, individual decisions and conditions. Evidence should also be used to identify patterns, prioritise interventions, and support proportionate responses.

5.2.2 All representations made by responsible authorities and other persons must clearly explain:

- why the matter is relevant to the licensing objectives
- how the concerns relate to those objectives
- how the issues identified could be reasonably mitigated or addressed.

5.2.3 Representations made by responsible authorities and other persons are expected to be supported by clear, robust and transparent evidence that is non-discriminatory in nature. Supporting evidence must accompany the representation at the time of submission (or as soon as it is available); and must not be withheld, or provided later. London licensing authorities should assess the weight to be given to such representations alongside all other relevant information, including submissions from applicants and other parties.

5.2.4 London licensing authorities must ensure that every decision, request and condition is:

- appropriate for promoting the licensing objectives
- proportionate and reasonable in relation to objective and measurable risks identified
- clearly justified.

London licensing authorities must also ensure that, where possible, the desired outcome is achieved through the least burdensome and most cost-effective approach for applicants and licence holders.

5.2.5 London licensing authorities must consider each case on its merits; and explain, in a timely manner and in writing, the reasoning behind every determination. London licensing authorities must explain the reasons for imposing conditions; and state how each one is a proportionate requirement to promote the licensing objectives. Licensing conditions must not seek to impose a significant burden on an applicant or licence holder, unless there is evidence that this level of imposition is necessary to secure the licensing objectives.

5.2.6 Blanket or standard conditions must be avoided, as they undermine fair and proportionate decision-making. Conditions must be tailored to the specific premises, and to objective and measurable risks. Model conditions may be used as drafting aids. However, they should not be defaults/prerequisites, because this risks creating an unlawful blanket regime by proxy.

5.2.7 London licensing authorities are expected to avoid, without clear evidence in individual cases, applying rigid ‘core hours’ or ‘framework hours’ policies that restrict a business operation’s flexibility. Each case must be determined on its merits, considering:

- the nature of the premises
- its management
- the characteristics of the local area
- how flexible or staggered closing times can promote the licensing objectives.

5.2.8 London licensing authorities must avoid repeating requirements already covered by other regulatory regimes. They should only request additional evidence or measures where this is clearly necessary, to enable the London licensing authority to perform its licensing functions. London licensing authorities should engage

proactively with planning teams to achieve strategic coordination; prevent duplicated or conflicting conditions; and ensure that licensing decisions do not undermine planning decisions.

5.2.9 Examples of unnecessary or duplicated requirements include, but are not limited to:

- requests to provide CCTV that are not appropriate, proportional, or supported by risk or evidence
- conditions that repeat legal requirements already covered by other regimes, such as health and safety, planning, fire safety, environmental health or Martyn's Law
- requirements for full acoustic reports where there is no clear evidence of existing or reasonably anticipated noise impact
- standardised conditions on door supervision (save to the extent already required in the Licensing 2003 Act) that do not reflect the nature or risk level of the particular style of premises concerned.

5.2.10 London licensing authorities should take a proactive and pragmatic approach to ensuring licences are fit for purpose including conducting regular visits to licensed premises and operating licence simplification processes to help remove outdated, unnecessary or overly restrictive conditions.

5.3 Licensing decisions must support economic growth, socialising and culture

5.3.1 Licensing authorities should take an enabling approach, consistent with their statutory functions, that recognises responsible businesses as partners in delivering safe, inclusive and thriving local centres. The [Licensing Act 2003](#) is designed to enable lawfully made licensing applications. It does not aim to create a prescriptive regime that imposes disproportionate or burdensome conditions on premises.

5.3.2 Applied positively, the licensing function of a council should support economic growth, local employment, business investment and high street revival. The [Revised Guidance issued under section 182 by the Secretary of State](#) in November 2025 states, at 1.18: "When making licensing decisions, all licensing authorities should consider the need to promote growth and deliver economic benefits." Similarly, the [National Licensing Policy Framework](#) states:

"The 4 statutory objectives – public safety, prevention of crime and disorder, prevention of public nuisance, and protection of children from harm – remain vital. However, when 1 in 5 high street properties stands empty in some areas, licensing must also support broader ambitions: business investment and growth, high street revival, businesses supporting rural communities, festivals and events, local jobs, and community cohesion."

5.3.3 Applicants may seek to show clearly how their activities support economic growth, and cultural and social life, in line with local and London-wide policies and strategies.

5.3.4 Before submitting a representation, responsible authorities and other persons are encouraged to refer to the London Plan to determine whether the premises is in a designated strategic night-time activity area (see section 6.1.4). Where this is the case, the evidence supporting any representation should be strong enough to outweigh the expectation that these areas are suitable for nighttime activity.

5.3.5 London licensing authorities should support flexible opening hours that enable vibrant, well-managed centres throughout the day and night. By adopting a balanced approach to closing times, London licensing authorities are expected to:

- sustain local vibrancy
- support diverse business models
- ensure London remains a dynamic, round-the-clock city.

At the same time, licensing authorities should be safeguarding public safety, and residential amenity; and maintaining the licensing objectives.

5.3.6 In their decisions, licensing committees should recognise the economic, social and cultural value of well-run businesses. This includes how well-managed premises can contribute to employment; tourism; investment and regeneration; revitalisation of high streets and town centres; cultural and social life; and a real sense of belonging and community cohesion.

5.4 Licensing decisions should support a diverse and inclusive cultural, hospitality and night-time offer

5.4.1 A healthy diverse mix of nightlife options contribute to vibrant and safe town centres, with people of all ages sharing space at different times of day and night.

5.4.2 London licensing authorities should simplify processes; and remove barriers that prevent smaller operators, or community-led venues that support cultural and underrepresented communities (including queer and grassroots spaces) from obtaining licences. This includes supporting these operators, venues and community-focused activities to establish and sustain a presence in the sector.

5.4.3 When considering entertainment, London licensing authorities must ensure that any conditions related to live or recorded music, or other regulated entertainment, are proportionate and evidence-based. These should not unintentionally restrict live performance or creative expression promoted by either of the following:

- the operator of a licensed premises
- an external promoter who has entered into a contractual arrangement with such operators.

Licensing authorities should also ensure that decisions – and the evidence underpinning them – are free from discriminatory assumptions or biases about the type of entertainment, performers, or audiences involved.

5.4.4 Applications must be considered in terms of both risk and benefit. Alongside identifying risks and mitigation, applications can, where possible, explain and provide evidence of the wider value of the proposed activity – for example, how the premises will:

- contribute to local social vibrancy and employment, reducing social isolation and increasing participation

- improve health and cultural life
- meet the needs of under-served Londoners, including Londoners affected by intersectional disadvantage due to identifying as part of two or more underrepresented groups
- improve accessibility
- improve community safety.

5.4.5 London licensing authorities must appropriately consider such positive impacts, and the extent to which they could also support the licensing objectives. The London Licensing Playbook will provide guidance to support London licensing authorities in their assessment.

5.5 Licensing authorities must recognise and harness safety and health benefits of well-managed night-time activity

5.5.1 London licensing authorities must recognise that being able to operate flexibly after dark is not only a matter of convenience for leisure users; it is an essential part of a safe, modern, inclusive and competitive global city. Licensing authorities are encouraged to allow a range of closing times. This will help people to leave spaces more gradually – reducing congestion, transport pressure and the potential for anti-social behaviour, crime or nuisance.

5.5.2 London licensing authorities should collaborate with businesses, licensed premises and licence holders to create safe, well-regulated environments. These environments should minimise harms linked to drug use and excessive drinking; and encourage diverse, inclusive night-time activities that are not alcohol-centric.

5.5.3 London licensing authorities should work with licence holders to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of harm-reduction strategies. This should be done under arrangements that encourage transparency and cooperation, without creating unintended consequences to businesses.

5.5.4 London licensing authorities should make full use of the data collected through their licensing functions to develop a clear, evidence-led understanding of how licensing activity supports safety, community wellbeing and the reduction of harm. The London Licensing Playbook will provide guidance to support London licensing authorities in the use of data to assess these wider benefits. The evidence base should encompass, at a minimum:

- profile and distribution of licence types across the borough
- volume and outcomes of licence applications, including approvals and refusals
- patterns in enforcement and compliance activity
- local trends in crime, noise or anti-social behaviour, particularly at times of day that are relevant to the application under consideration.

5.5.5 London licensing authorities should also use data proactively to:

- target support for small operators
- highlight where safety initiatives are working well

- identify areas that could benefit from regeneration or additional resources.

5.6 London licensing authorities must ensure a transparent licensing process, supported by early engagement, proportionate enforcement and a graduated approach to resolving problems

5.6.1 London licensing authorities must approach all applications in an open, transparent and constructive way. Applicants, responsible authorities and other persons must be treated fairly and have equal access to information.

5.6.2 London licensing authorities should consider adopting service standards, where these are not already in place. These should set out expected timelines for processing applications; and help applicants understand what to expect. This would improve predictability and transparency, while retaining case-by-case decision-making.

5.6.3 Early communication and genuine mediation (potentially involving a neutral intermediary to facilitate constructive and open discussions) between all parties should be encouraged to identify and resolve concerns before a hearing becomes necessary. Pre-application discussions can help address issues such as operating schedules, noise management, community safety and accessibility.

5.6.4 Responsible authorities and applicants are expected to engage in pre-application discussions, to pre-emptively address any potential issues. Plans should also be co-designed between applicants, police and community liaisons before submitting an application, wherever possible.

5.6.5 Decisions to proceed to a hearing must be evidence-led. London licensing authorities must follow best practice to avoid hearings wherever possible. Hearings should be called as a last resort, used only when and if all other possibilities have been exhausted.

5.6.6 Where issues arise, licensing and responsible authorities should, where possible, adopt a graduated response. This should start with informal negotiation and support, and escalate only where necessary.

5.6.7 London licensing authorities, police and community partners should, where possible, work together to proactively identify patterns of concern before escalation; and provide targeted support or training where needed. This collaborative approach builds trust; prevents problems; and avoids the need for punitive action and reviews.

5.6.8 Formal enforcement or review must be a last resort, reserved for persistent, intended or serious breaches. When enforcement is necessary, London licensing authorities should ensure it is evidence-based, and proportionate to the harm caused or the risk presented. Decisions and reasons must always be communicated clearly to those affected.

5.6.9 Before starting a review, London licensing authorities and partners may consider whether the matter can be addressed through advice, voluntary improvements, independent mediation or agreed action plans. Where practically possible, operators must, before a review is called, be given clear notice of the concerns; the supporting evidence; and the opportunity to respond.

5.6.10 Where other options have been exhausted, and a review is necessary, London licensing authorities must ensure that proceedings are transparent and evidence-based. Decisions must show how up-to-date evidence can properly be linked to the premises in question; and how it relates to the licensing objectives. Any conditions imposed must be proportionate to the issues and objectives; and backed by up-to-date evidence.

5.6.11 When dealing with summary reviews, London licensing authorities should, where possible, consider:

- whether the circumstances truly require emergency intervention
- what interim steps are appropriate and proportionate
- whether the matter could instead be addressed through a standard review or other enforcement tools.

5.6.12 Authorities must provide written reasons in a timely manner for any interim measures taken. They must also ensure that the licence holder has an opportunity to make representations within the statutory timescale. Final decisions for summary reviews must follow the same transparent and evidence-based principles as standard reviews.

6. Five Mayoral priorities for licensing

6.1 About the priorities

6.1.1 These Mayoral priorities reflect city-wide ambitions to strengthen London's nightlife economy and cultural offer – ensuring growth, vibrancy and resilience. Alongside their own local priorities, London licensing authorities must have regard to these priorities when preparing or updating Statements of Licensing Policy; and as part of the licensing process. These priorities will also inform the Mayor's own determinations of licensing applications of strategic importance.

6.1.2 The Mayoral priorities should be read alongside the London Licensing Playbook, when available. This provides guidance, examples and tools to support delivery of these priorities.

6.2 Promote better alignment between the licensing and the planning regimes

6.2.1 Where a premises requires both planning and licensing permissions, London licensing authorities should work with planning teams to encourage coordinated processes and aligned conditions. In appropriate cases, this may include holding planning and licensing hearings in parallel or in close sequence, noting in particular the provisions set out in section 7(3)-(9) of the [Licensing Act 2003](#). Coordination reduces delay; lowers costs for applicants and London licensing authorities; could prevent conflicting decisions; and provides greater certainty for operators and investors.

6.2.2 Licensing policies should, wherever possible, align with the [London Plan](#) to avoid policy conflict; and support coherent regeneration and place-making. London licensing authorities should also engage proactively with local planning teams during plan-making.

6.2.3 The London Plan 2021 states that boroughs should develop a vision for the night-time economy. Local authorities are expected to include, in these strategies, how they plan to use licensing as a tool to support safer, busier and more inclusive centres after dark.

6.2.4 London's night-time economy is generally concentrated in the CAZ and in town centres across the city. The London Plan identifies three categories of strategic night-time activity areas:

- areas of international or national significance (NT1)
- areas of regional or sub-regional significance (NT2)
- areas with more than local significance (NT3)

Licensing authorities' policies and decisions should – wherever possible, and consistent with the proper exercise of their licensing functions under the [Licensing Act 2003](#) – prioritise these areas for night-time growth, and remove unnecessarily restrictive core-hours policies.

6.2.5 Licensing authorities should work with the local planning authority to:

- apply the Agent of Change principle in planning decisions
- ensure measures agreed as part of the Agent of Change are appropriate and robust; and protect the viability of pubs, music venues, cultural spaces and events.

This includes ensuring that new developments, near existing licensed premises, take responsibility for mitigating impacts such as existing and potential noise on the new use, rather than placing undue burdens on established venues. It also means ensuring that developers who build near existing licensed premises robustly assess and document sound levels, at all realistically representative locations and times of the day and night, from the outset.

6.2.6 Should representations arise, and before determining any licensing application, London licensing authorities should ensure the Agent of Change measures secured through the planning process have been fully implemented in the new sensitive development. This should be done with planning, environmental health and regeneration teams. This approach helps development and nightlife coexist successfully and to the mutual benefit of each.

6.2.7 Before initiating enforcement action, licensing authorities and responsible authorities are expected to ensure that the new sensitive development complies with all Agent of Change measures attached to the planning permission. Licensing authorities should also ensure that mitigation measures are properly tested and maintained. They should formally advise developers and their architects that any enforcement action, where necessary, will be directed to the party accountable for compliance with planning and mitigation requirements.

6.3 Ensure a proportionate use of cumulative impact assessments

6.3.1 A Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) is a tool for addressing demonstrable, place-based and otherwise unavoidable problems linked to the concentration of licensed premises. CIAs are not intended (and should not be used by authorities) to create general blanket restrictions on responsible, well-managed hospitality, nightlife, culture or events.

6.3.2 A CIA should not create a rebuttable presumption to refuse applications. London licensing authorities must consider each application on its individual merits; and on the basis of current, robust and locally relevant evidence. As the [Revised Guidance issued under section 182 by the Secretary of State](#) says:

“The CIA does not, however, change the fundamental way that licensing decisions are made. It is therefore open to the licensing authority to grant an application where it considers it is appropriate and where the applicant can demonstrate in the operating schedule that they would not be adding to the cumulative impact. Applications in areas covered by a CIA should therefore give consideration

to potential cumulative impact issues when setting out the steps that will be taken to promote the licensing objectives. Where relevant representations are received and a licensing authority decides to grant an application it will need to provide the applicant, the chief officer of police and all parties who made relevant representations with reasons for granting the application and this should include any reasons for departing from their own policy.”

6.3.3 Decisions relying on cumulative impact must demonstrate a causal link between the type and scale of the proposed activity, and the specific harms identified as risks to the licensing objectives.

6.3.4 When periodically reviewing and updating a CIA, London licensing authorities must test whether the underlying evidence remains accurate, representative and fit for purpose, before relying on it.

6.3.5 Where an application proposes a well-managed offer, aligned with London-wide Mayoral priorities for licensing, London licensing authorities should assess whether appropriate conditions or mitigations can address local concerns in a proportionate way. Licensing authorities must not default to refusal, solely due to CIA designation.

6.3.6 London licensing authorities should ensure that CIAs do not inadvertently undermine the strategic role played by areas of night-time activity, or by specialist clusters of arts, culture and entertainment, as designated in the London Plan. Where a CIA is in tension with an area designated as such in the London Plan, London licensing authorities should consider the strategic importance of that designation; and give it appropriate weight in their determination of applications in the statutory context.

6.3.7 Where a proposed CIA relates to an area designated in the London Plan for night-time activity, or to specialist clusters of arts, culture and entertainment, or to town-centre intensification, London licensing authorities must consult the Mayor as part of the CIA consultation process; and have regard to any representations made on strategic alignment and evidential sufficiency.

6.3.8 The London Plan designation should act as a guiding framework when interpreting local evidence – provided that decisions continue to promote the licensing objectives, and comply with the [Licensing Act 2003](#).

6.4 Promote major events, socialising, social cohesion and community life

6.4.1 London licensing authorities should support major events through coordinated planning; timely engagement with organisers; and proportionate licensing requirements. Decisions should consider the economic, cultural and promotional benefits, and reputational importance of major events, while ensuring public safety and local amenity.

6.4.2 London licensing authorities should work closely with event organisers, the police, local businesses, transport providers, other local authorities (where needed) and UK government departments, to enable well-managed events that contribute positively to London’s identity and economy.

6.4.3 Licensing decisions should support a broad range of social spaces, where all Londoners can meet, connect, and participate in cultural and community life. This includes pubs; bars; restaurants; low and no-alcohol spaces; cultural and community spaces and events; sites of significance for intangible cultural heritage; and informal gathering places. London licensing authorities should also recognise the benefits of using spaces as community anchors for underrepresented and marginalised groups, and to support delivery of creative health activities for Londoners to thrive.

6.4.4 London licensing authorities should recognise that well-run venues and events can provide social (and therefore health) benefits, even as they are mitigating or preventing harms.

6.5 Contribute to revitalised high streets through meanwhile uses, pavement licensing and innovation for nightlife spaces

6.5.1 London licensing authorities should recognise that meanwhile activity is now a mainstream part of the cultural, hospitality and creative sectors. It is not an exception. When licensing decisions support responsible meanwhile uses, temporary permissions, cultural and community events, and activation projects, they should:

- help bring life back to vacant units
- strengthen local identity and community cohesion
- provide access to underrepresented groups
- attract new investment.

6.5.2 Decisions must also take account of the economic and social benefits of reactivating space – particularly in areas with high vacancy rates or declining footfall. London licensing authorities should, therefore, take a proportionate and enabling approach to temporary uses. This ensures that processes are clear and responsive, so that operators can use these opportunities effectively, while safeguarding the licensing objectives.

6.5.3 London licensing authorities should work with planning teams to ensure their effective alignment. This will facilitate the timely, safe, and consistent delivery of meanwhile uses. This coordinated approach enables high streets to benefit from renewed activity, while minimising unnecessary administrative burdens.

6.5.4 A pavement licence is an authorisation, from local authorities, allowing businesses to put temporary furniture on the pavement beside their premises. It is granted under the Business and Planning Act 2020 and the Highways Act 1980. Though licensable activities under the [Licensing Act 2003](#) do not cover pavement licence permissions, the subject remains highly relevant in supporting the strategic ambitions of this policy – particularly in fostering vibrant, accessible and well-managed high streets and public spaces. Outdoor space:

- allows businesses to extend their offer
- improves the attractiveness of local town centres
- promotes social activity in a safe and well-managed environment
- supports balancing business models, so that businesses can be viable.

6.5.5 Where permissible under the [Licensing Act 2003](#), London licensing authorities are encouraged to use minor variations, where granting a pavement licence may require changes to a premises licence. This includes, for example, authorising the sale of alcohol or late-night refreshment within the licensed outdoor area. These variations must be processed in a proportionate and timely manner, recognising that the licence extension is often limited in scope; does not change the character of the premises; and can support safer and more inclusive use of outdoor space, which includes considering the needs of those with mobility issues. Any conditions must be appropriate, proportionate and based on evidence.

6.5.6 Licensing authorities should provide clear guidance on how applicants can align the [Licensing Act 2003](#), the Business and Planning Act 2020 and the Highways Act 1980 to avoid delays, duplication or inconsistent outcomes.

6.5.7 Licensing decisions should support spaces that want to diversify; introduce innovative models; and/or adapt to changing habits and demands. This includes multidisciplinary spaces, mixed-use spaces, creative

programming, new formats and alternative opening patterns. Where proposals are well managed, and do not undermine the licensing objectives, London licensing authorities should support flexibility, and enable well-planned innovation and experimentation.

6.6 Ensure London remains a safe, welcoming and inclusive city

6.6.1 London licensing authorities should work closely with councils and the Metropolitan Police Service to ensure public spaces feel and are safer. There should be a particular focus on the safety needs of women, girls and underrepresented groups.

6.6.2 Local authorities should prioritise initiatives in high-risk public spaces. This includes ensuring adequate lighting, and maintaining a visible policing presence at night-time – especially in areas around transport hubs, and along key routes home.

6.6.3 Licensing authorities and responsible authorities are encouraged to work with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in delivering programmes to prevent and respond to intimidation and violence in public spaces. This includes, but is not limited to, Public Space Protection Orders; and the pan-London network of local authority leads on Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG coordinators).

6.6.4 Licence holders, operators and spaces are encouraged to embed tackling VAWG considerations as part of the planning for all activities, major events and festivals.

6.6.5 The London Licensing Playbook will outline what is expected from authorities and spaces to tackle VAWG, including sexual harassment and drink spiking.

7. Working in partnership

7.1 To ensure effective licensing, there needs to be collaboration between London licensing authorities; the GLA; the Metropolitan Police Service; other responsible authorities; the health system; businesses; and communities. Partnership working, inclusive engagement and clear communication should be established from the outset. This will prevent hearings and unnecessary delays and costs; and deliver benefits for all parties involved in licensing. The Mayor and the GLA will work with key stakeholders to promote consistency, strengthen collaboration, and facilitate shared learning across London.

7.2 London licensing authorities are encouraged to participate in cross-London networks to exchange data and good practice. This includes GLA-led working and support groups; and police liaison meetings. Joint working helps align objectives across safety, regeneration, economy, culture and health.

7.3 The Metropolitan Police Service is expected to actively engage at borough and strategic levels, to ensure the successful implementation of this policy. Their operational experience, data and partnership with boroughs, licence holders and businesses are essential to preventing crime, protecting vulnerable people and shaping evidence-led policy.

7.4 London licensing authorities are encouraged to maintain regular dialogue with responsible authorities, business forums, cultural partnerships and local residents. This is so they can share information; identify trends; and agree coordinated action at strategic and operational levels.

7.5 Where issues arise that cross local authority boundaries, neighbouring authorities should cooperate to achieve consistent, evidence-based outcomes.

8. Data to support the London Strategic Licensing Policy and future evaluation

8.1 Transparency through open data

8.1.1 By regularly publishing clear, usable data, London licensing authorities are expected to help Londoners, the GLA, responsible authorities and others understand how licensing activity promotes licensing principles; and enhances inclusion and economic growth. It can also build public and investor confidence; and shows that decisions are fair, proportionate and based on evidence.

8.1.2 Licensing authorities are already subject to a statutory duty, under the [Licensing Act 2003](#), to maintain public registers of licensing applications and issued licences; and to make these registers available for public inspection. London licensing authorities are encouraged to maintain, and publish online, easily accessible, accurate and up-to-date information about applications, decisions and policies. This should include details of hearings, review outcomes, conditions and cumulative impact assessments, written in clear and accessible language.

8.1.3 London licensing authorities are also encouraged to record information including:

- descriptions of premises
- operating hours
- locations of premises
- the nature of representations received.

The GLA will, in partnership with London licensing authorities, provide a shared data standard (to which this open data should conform) through the London Licensing Playbook.

8.1.4 London licensing authorities are encouraged to make this information available under an open licence, and in a machine-readable format. Where London licensing authorities lack the capacity or capability to deliver this themselves, the GLA can work with them to reduce the burden. This may be by, for example, finding technological solutions to data standardisation; or providing shared infrastructure to publish data.

8.2 Data to support evaluation

8.2.1 London licensing authorities, responsible authorities and the GLA will review how licensing decisions and partnerships are performing. Lessons from enforcement outcomes, community feedback, and economic and other indicators should feed into future policy development.

8.2.2 The GLA will support London licensing authorities by collating shared learning; coordinating pan-London engagement; and promoting best practice through guidance, events and case studies.

The GLA will also work with the Metropolitan Police Service to capture learning from enforcement outcomes and partnership initiatives that improve safety and trust in the licensing system. This collaborative approach will ensure that licensing in London remains fair, proportionate and responsive to change.

8.2.3 The GLA will use information shared with it, as a responsible authority, to support internal-facing monitoring and evaluation activity. This will allow the GLA to understand the impact of its decision; support London licensing authorities to take a pan-London view of licensing activity; and build partnerships on the basis of evidence.

8.2.4 The GLA will also make the results of its monitoring and evaluation work available externally. This will allow us to communicate lessons learned; improve ways of working; and articulate the benefits of this policy for Londoners. For this, the GLA will use information shared with it as part of call-in decisions, as well as open data that has been newly published as part of the transparency duties detailed above.

8.2.5 To further enable monitoring and evaluation of the policy, the GLA will collect further data from operators and applicants, where needed, to evaluate perceptions and experiences of the process.

8.2.6 These data sources will be combined with additional data, including around footfall and spend; business and labour markets; media and communications. This will achieve a well-rounded, holistic understanding of this policy's impact.

9. Appendix 1: Glossary

This glossary provides clarity on key terms used in the London Strategic Licensing Policy that are not exhaustively defined in the [Licensing Act 2003](#); or that may be interpreted differently in practice. It is intended to support consistent, transparent and evidence-led decision-making.

- **Accessibility:** The extent to which a place, service or activity can be accessed, understood and used by as many people as possible. In the nightlife and night-time context, this includes physical access for disabled people; inclusive design; sensory and neurodiversity-aware environments; clear information; and the removal of social, cultural and economic barriers to participation.
- **Agent of Change:** A planning and licensing policy principle, under which the party introducing a new use or development is responsible for managing and mitigating its impacts. In practice, this puts responsibility on new residential or noise-sensitive development, near licensed or cultural premises, to mitigate impacts such as noise, rather than imposing retrospective restrictions on established businesses.
- **Bar:** A licensed premises primarily engaged in the sale and consumption of alcohol on the premises – often with a more drinks-led, concept-led or design-focused offer than a traditional pub. Bars may involve higher levels of vertical drinking; a stronger evening focus; and a more time-limited trading pattern.
- **Business-friendly licensing:** An approach to licensing that enables responsible business operation, innovation and investment. It does so by ensuring processes, conditions and enforcement are proportionate, predictable, transparent and evidence-led, while promoting the licensing objectives.
- **Call-in power:** The discretionary power that may be granted to the Mayor of London to review and re-determine certain licensing applications after a London licensing authority has made its decision, where the application is of strategic importance to London as a whole. If conferred, this power is intended as a backstop and safeguard, rather than a routine intervention.
- **Central Activities Zone:** A planning designation for central London. It is shown diagrammatically in the London Plan (Policy SD4 and Figure 2.16 – CAZ Diagram), and is defined in detail in relevant boroughs' local plans.

- **Community:** A group of people connected by geography, shared identity, purpose, interest or lived experience. In licensing, community includes residents; workers; patrons; cultural participants; and those affected directly or indirectly by licensed activity.
- **Cultural infrastructure:** Buildings, spaces and networks that support the creation, production, presentation and participation in culture. This includes music venues, arts spaces, rehearsal rooms, studios and event spaces.
- **Diversity:** The presence of people from a wide range of backgrounds, identities and experiences. This includes people of different ages, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, disabilities and socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Equity:** The principle that fairness may require different levels of support, recognition or adjustment to address structural disadvantage; and enable comparable outcomes. In licensing, this includes reducing systemic barriers faced by underrepresented operators and communities.
- **Evidence-based or evidence-led:** An approach to decision-making based on relevant, up-to-date and robust evidence. This includes data, recorded incidents, professional expertise and documented experience. Evidence must demonstrate a causal link to the licensing objectives, rather than relying on generalised concern or correlation.
- **Event space:** A premises or defined area primarily used for programmed, time-limited or curated events, rather than continuous day-to-day trading. Events may include live performance, club nights, exhibitions, private hires, festivals or community gatherings. Event spaces may operate under premises licences or temporary permissions. There may be significantly different operating patterns, layouts and risk profiles between events.
- **Footfall:** The number of people moving through, or spending time in, a particular area. Increased footfall can support natural surveillance, perceptions of safety and economic activity, when appropriately managed.
- **Formal mediation:** A structured process facilitated by an independent or agreed third party. As part of this process, applicants, London licensing authorities, responsible authorities and/or residents seek to resolve concerns, agree mitigations or amend proposals. The aim of the process is that they go on to work together collaboratively, in a way that – as far as possible – meets each parties' reasonable requirements; and avoids the significant delay and costs incurred in a contested licensing hearing and determination of the issues by a licensing authority.
- **Grassroots music venue (GMV):** A dedicated premises whose primary purpose is to present and promote live music – particularly supporting new and emerging artists, performing original material. Alcohol and other services are ancillary to live music activity, rather than the venue's dominant purpose. Characterised by:
 - live music as its core and consistent activity
 - investment in programming, without expecting a guaranteed profit
 - its cultural and economic contribution to the local night-time economy
 - recognition by artists, audiences and the local music community
- **Harm reduction:** Policies, practices and measures aimed at reducing health, safety and social harms associated with certain activities – rather than attempting to eliminate those activities entirely. In nightlife, this may include welfare provision, safe spaces, staff training, clear information and partnership working.
- **High-risk activity:** Licensed activity that, based on evidence and reasonable assessment, presents a higher likelihood of undermining one or more licensing objectives. This may be due to factors such as scale, operating hours, location, management history or operating model.
- **Iconic or high-profile location:** A place with particular cultural, economic, symbolic, community or reputational significance for London. This includes locations that shape local, national or international perceptions of the city.
- **Informal negotiation:** Early, non-statutory engagement between applicants, residents, responsible authorities and licensing officers. It aims to resolve concerns before or alongside an application, without

the need for formal hearing proceedings.

- **Meanwhile space:** A space that is vacant or awaiting redevelopment; and is temporarily activated for cultural, social or commercial use. Meanwhile uses can reduce vacancy, test new models of activity, support regeneration and increase footfall.
- **Mixed-use area:** An area where residential, commercial, cultural, hospitality and other uses coexist – side-by-side, vertically, or at different times of day and night. Mixed-use areas require effective and balanced and proportionate management.
- **Multidisciplinary space:** A premises designed or programmed to regularly host multiple types of activity. This may be cultural, creative, community, workspace or hospitality uses. Different activities may take place at different times of day, or in different parts of the premises. The mix of uses may evolve over time, according to the uses permitted through planning.
- **Nightlife economy:** Events, activities and spaces that encourage social and cultural participation between 6pm and 6am.
- **Nightlife worker:** An individual employed within nightlife activities. This includes artists, performers, DJs, technicians, security staff, bar staff, and production or support roles.
- **Night-time economy:** The full range of economic, social and cultural activity taking place between 6pm and 6am. This includes hospitality, retail, culture, services, transport and logistics.
- **Night-time worker:** A person whose primary working hours fall within 6pm and 6am across any sector of the economy.
- **Nightclub:** A premises primarily designed and operated for late-night socialising and dancing. It typically has a dancefloor, amplified music, specialist lighting and a focus on activity after 11pm. Alcohol sales, where authorised, are generally integral to the offer. Entry is often controlled through ticketing or door management; and trading patterns are commonly concentrated on specific nights.
- **Pop-up:** A time-limited use of a premises or site, often operating under temporary permission, tenancy or licence. Pop-ups are commonly used to pilot new cultural or hospitality offers; activate vacant units; or deliver short-term events. They may have reduced fit-out and infrastructure compared with permanent premises.
- **Proportionate / proportionality:** The principle that licensing decisions, conditions and enforcement actions must be no more restrictive than appropriate to address clearly evidenced risks to the licensing objectives; and that less burdensome alternatives have been considered.
- **Pub:** A licensed premises whose primary purpose is the sale and consumption of alcohol on the premises, often serving a local or neighbourhood social function. Food, music or other activities may be offered, but are typically ancillary to its core role as a communal drinking venue.
- **Reputational importance:** The extent to which a premises, event or decision may influence perceptions of London, a town centre or neighbourhood. This includes its cultural identity, inclusivity, safety and attractiveness as a global destination.
- **Scene:** A network or community of people connected through shared cultural activity, creative practice or interests. It is often associated with specific spaces, locations or forms of expression.

10. Appendix 2: London Strategic Licensing Pilot

10.1 About the London Strategic Licensing Pilot

In April 2025, the UK government announced its intention to work with the GLA, to pilot new strategic licensing powers for the Mayor of London.

The London Strategic Licensing Pilot seeks to promote growth, whilst protecting safety and community wellbeing. Well-managed venues, businesses and events can reduce crime and anti-social behaviour – as can close partnerships between London licensing authorities, responsible authorities (including the police), businesses and the wider community. This creates safer, more welcoming places – particularly for women, girls, marginalised communities and people who may need additional support.

New legislation is expected to give the Mayor a formal role in licensing, through the following measures to be introduced into the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (as proposed to be amended by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill):

- Powers granted to the Mayor to set a London-wide Strategic Licensing Policy; and duties on London licensing authorities to have regard to it, under section 4(4) of the Act, in carrying out its licensing functions, alongside their own current licensing policy and the [Revised Guidance issued under section 182 by the Secretary of State](#).
- Requirements for London licensing authorities to consult the Mayor when determining or revising their own statement of licensing policy. This ensures that the Mayor has an opportunity to provide strategic views, and that these will be considered.
- Adding the GLA as a responsible authority.
- Introducing a discretionary power for the Mayor to determine licence applications (or applications to vary a premises licence) of strategic importance, after a licensing authority has made its decision.

These measures depend on legislative changes that are currently subject to Parliamentary approval; and secondary legislation to be laid throughout 2026. They will not take effect until the relevant Bill has successfully completed all Parliamentary stages and received Royal Assent, thereby becoming law.

It is expected that, through secondary legislation, the Secretary of State will prescribe the definition of ‘applications of potential strategic importance’ and establish regulations governing the procedures for the exercise of these powers.

The aims of the London Strategic Licensing Pilot are to:

- increase economic growth in hospitality, culture, events and nightlife, while ensuring a safe and inclusive environment
- boost London’s reputation as a destination for tourism, business and investment
- improve the quality, transparency and use of data and information, to inform decision-making and monitor the impact of licensing policies
- deliver a pilot that can help inform national policy.

At the end of this pilot, success would mean:

- an equitable, more transparent, proportionate and evidence-led licensing system that supports economic growth, and reduces unnecessary cost and bureaucracy for businesses
- stronger partnerships between the Mayor, London licensing authorities, businesses, responsible authorities, and communities – leading to more consistent decisions and shared learning
- better use of data and evidence to inform decisions, evaluate impact, and share insights across London
- a more vibrant and growing hospitality, nightlife, culture and events industry
- environments that feel safer and more inclusive for Londoners and visitors – with specific focus on the safety of women, girls and people who may need additional support
- an enhanced global reputation for London as a leading destination for hospitality, nightlife, culture and events

- clear evidence and lessons that shape licensing reform nationally.

The Mayor's London Strategic Licensing Policy and powers, outlined above, are expected to be introduced in summer 2026. The GLA intends to review it after 2 years.

Findings will be submitted to the UK government to help develop national licensing policy. A decision will be taken, on the basis of evidence gathered, on whether the Mayor's powers should be extended; made permanent; rolled out to other mayoralties; or cease.

10.2 What we will do

To achieve these outcomes, the Mayor will do the following:

- Consult on and publish the London Strategic Licensing Policy, to set out the Mayor's expected approach to licensing across the capital. Alongside national guidance, this will guide local decisions; and ensure London-wide principles and priorities are considered alongside local priorities.
- Review draft Statements of Licensing Policy as they are developed by London licensing authorities. The Mayor will assess whether, in addition to performing their statutory function, they promote economic growth and align with the London Strategic Licensing Policy.
- Act as a responsible authority to promote the consistent and effective application of the London Strategic Licensing Policy across London.
- Operate a new call-in power for applications of strategic importance. This will ensure that major decisions support London-wide priorities.
- Work with partners (including London licensing authorities and responsible authorities) to improve consistency in how licensing data is collected and evaluated; and scope how data collection, transparency, and sharing can be improved across London, to support better decision-making.
- Provide guidance, training and support to help London licensing authorities and businesses undertake licensing activity and apply the London Strategic Licensing Policy. This London Strategic Licensing Playbook will be co-developed with London licensing authorities, businesses, the police and other partners.

10.3 How we will measure success

At the end of the pilot, London will have a strategic licensing model that works better for everyone. It will promote not only the licensing objectives, but also growth, fairness and safety. In this way, it will strengthen London's position as a world-leading 24-hour city.

Progress will be measured through a set of key indicators. These are outlined in the table below:

Outcome	Indicators
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<p>A higher-quality, more transparent, proportionate, and evidence-driven licensing system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer conditions imposed on premises licences • Several licensing cases are determined without going to hearing • Fewer cases brought for review, or going to appeal
<p>Stronger partnerships between London licensing authorities, businesses, responsible authorities, and communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of partnership working and active local forums
<p>An enhanced global reputation for London</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visitor numbers considered against relevant financial data • Media sentiment
<p>A vibrant and growing hospitality, culture, events and nightlife industry</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in the number and diversity of licensed venues, businesses, and cultural events • Levels of night-time employment • Investment and occupancy rates in town centres
<p>Environments that feel safer and more inclusive for Londoners and visitors – with specific focus on the safety of women, girls, children and people who may need additional support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer complaints and incidents of public nuisance, crime and disorder • Improved actual or perceived safety, inclusion and accessibility
<p>Increased public confidence in the licensing system.</p>	<p>Public and business confidence</p>

These indicators will help show whether the Strategic Licensing Pilot is delivering on its aims of:

- increasing economic growth
- boosting London's reputation
- increasing the quality, transparency and use of data
- informing the national programme of licensing reform.

11. Appendix 3: Criteria for Applications of Strategic Importance

Under the Licensing Act 2003 (as proposed to be amended by the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill), the Mayor of London may determine that a licensing application is of strategic importance,

and therefore eligible for call-in – based on the extent to which they consider it meets at least one of the criteria set out in the sections below. The application must also, in the Mayor’s opinion, be capable of being of strategic importance to the promotion of the licensing objectives of the Licensing Act 2003.

Provisions in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill are intended to provide the Secretary of State with the power to define, in secondary legislation, “applications of potential strategic importance”. This is a key aspect of the scope of the Mayor’s call-in power. The final criteria will be subject to further policy decisions and legislation from the government, which will ultimately determine the types of application that the Mayor may choose to call in and issue a direction on.

This Appendix 3 sets out a proposal on how these potential criteria (i.e., economic impact, location of strategic importance, and reputational importance), if provided for, could be applied in a London context. It should be noted that they remain subject to change.

Section 1: Economic impact

These criteria are selected to focus support on venues and activities capable of generating substantial economic activity London-wide. They aim to target premises with greater capacity, higher turnover, and a more significant economic footprint. Large festival and special events attracting substantial visitor numbers are included, due to the relevant role they play in London’s economy. Meanwhile-use spaces are also included, given their ability to activate empty or underused spaces for economic and social benefit; and to bring vacant premises back into productive use, while longer-term plans are developed.

Ref	Criteria
1.1	Premises with a rateable value over E
1.2	Events covered by a time limited premises licence of 3 months or less
1.3	Applications for premises licences supporting meanwhile uses with a rateable value of D or above

Section 2: Location of strategic importance

These criteria are intended to align local decision-making with locations that the London Plan has identified as being central to delivering London’s nightlife, cultural, economic and regeneration priorities. They also aim to ensure that the Mayor can review applications within Cumulative Impact Assessments (CIAs); or that other special policy areas are considered in line with London-wide principles and priorities in the context of the licensing objectives.

Ref	Criteria
2.1	<p>Applications for on-sales of alcohol, regulated entertainment and/or supply of late-night refreshment for consumption on the premises, only in areas identified in the London Plan 2021 as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Night Time Economy Area of National or International Significance (NT1)• Night Time Economy Area of regional or sub-regional significance (NT2)• Central Activities Zone• International, Metropolitan, Major and District town centres with high commercial growth potential• Metropolitan, Major and District town centres within strategic areas for regeneration

Ref	Criteria
2.2	<p>Applications for on-sales of alcohol and/or regulated entertainment that are located within either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a designated CIA area • any other area based restriction introduced in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003

Section 3: Reputational importance

These criteria are intended for premises or events that are likely to draw national or international audiences; significantly influence the character or identity of a high street, town centre, or neighbourhood; or otherwise shape wider perceptions of London's cultural, social, or economic life.

Ref	Criteria
3.1	Premises or events in iconic or high-profile locations identified in the London Growth Plan (internationally significant visitor destinations, and potential future internationally significant visitor destinations)
3.2	Areas covered by a Mayoral Development Area or a Mayor Development Order
3.3	Events that are formally supported by the UK government, and/or are part of, or officially linked to, mega events as set out in the Gold Framework. In this context, formal support includes events that receive government funding, guarantees and/or endorsement.

Exclusion criteria

For the avoidance of doubt, all premises not falling into the following categories will be excluded from potential call-in:

- the sale by retail of alcohol primarily 'on' the premises
- the provision of regulated entertainment within the meaning of Schedule 1 to the Licensing Act 2003
- the provision of late-night refreshment within the meaning of Schedule 2 to the Licensing Act 2003.

Therefore, the following categories are excluded:

- off-licences
- club certificates
- TENs
- premises with a rateable value A to C
- firework display events.

12. Other formats and languages

For a large print, Braille, disc, sign language video or audio-tape version of this document, please contact us at the address below:

Public Liaison Unit
Greater London Authority
City Hall
Kamal Chunchie Way
London E16 1ZE

Telephone: 020 7983 4100

Website: www.london.gov.uk

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