

To: Licensing & Gambling Act Committee

Date: 22nd September 2025

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive for Citizens and City Services

Title of Report: Review of the Cumulative Impact Assessment and Special Saturation Policy

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To review the Cumulative Impact Assessment and determine the Special Saturation Policy
Key decision:	No
Corporate Priority:	Strong, Fair Economy & Thriving Communities.
Policy Framework:	Statement of Licensing Policy.

Recommendation(s): That the Licensing & Gambling Acts Committee resolves to:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the report and Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2025-2028. 2. Agree to the Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2025-2028 including the recommendation to control cumulative impact by retaining a Special Saturation Policy covering City Centre and East Oxford areas. 3. Recommend to Full Council adoption of the Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2025-2028 and continued Special Saturation Policy covering City Centre and East Oxford areas.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	2022-2025 Cumulative Impact Assessment	No
Appendix 2	Consultation Responses & Analysis	No
Appendix 3	Licensing Authority Briefing Note	No
Appendix 4	2025-2028 Cumulative Impact Assessment	No
Appendix 5	Equality Impact Assessment	No

Introduction and background

1. A responsibility of the Licensing Authority is to promote the four licensing objectives enshrined in the Licensing Act 2003:
 - The Prevention of Crime and Disorder
 - The Promotion of Public Safety
 - The Prevention of Public Nuisance
 - The Protection of Children from Harm
2. The distribution of premises may be such as to warrant special action from the Authority to combat exceptional problems of disorder and public nuisance over and above the impact from individual premises.
3. A Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) is used as an evidence-based tool for Licensing Authorities to consider adoption of a Special Saturation Policy (SSP); which creates a rebuttable presumption that applications for a new Premises Licence, Club Premises Certificate or material variations will normally be refused, if relevant representations are received, unless it can be demonstrated that the operation of the premises involved will not add to the cumulative impact of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area.
4. An SSP is intended to ensure stronger safeguards are in place in higher crime areas, preventing additional nuisance, crime, and disorder. Applicants are expected to address the broader context and existing challenges in the area that they operate, such as ongoing issues with anti-social behaviour, or pressures on local services, even if they are new and have not contributed to existing issues. This approach ensures the application doesn't unintentionally add to those problems and enables the Licensing Authority to address applications that fail to adequately consider the cumulative impact. In doing so, the Authority is better equipped to protect residents, manage the night-time economy, and uphold the licensing objectives in areas experiencing high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.
5. The previous CIA and SSP (April 2022 – March 2025) states that the Authority is of the opinion that the number of licensed premises and club premises certificates within the City Centre and East Oxford area is such that it is likely that granting further licences or variations to licences would be inconsistent with the authority's duty to promote the licensing objectives. This statement is a statutory requirement and does not mean that all new or varied applications will be refused; rather, each application will be considered on its own merits, and applicants will be expected to demonstrate robust measures to uphold the licensing objectives in these areas.

A copy of the 2022-2025 Cumulative Impact Assessment can be found at **Appendix One**.

6. During the previous policy period (April 2022 – March 2025), the Licensing Authority received a total of 120 new premises licence or variation applications. Of these, 52 were located within SSP areas (39 in Central Oxford and 13 in East Oxford). Eight of these applications were referred to a Sub-Committee for determination, with 3

attracting objections from the police citing the SSP. One application (variation) was refused, 51 were granted with existing or additional conditions.

Consultation Analysis

7. The Licensing Authority carried out a nine-week consultation period, which started on 17th February 2025 and ended on 21st April 2025.
8. The Authority received responses from responsible authorities, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue and Thames Valley Police, and a further twenty-seven (27) responses from the public during the consultation period.
9. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue strongly agreed to keeping both Special Saturation Policies in the City Centre and East Oxford. Their main concerns regarding the night-time economy were:
 1. *Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour*
Alcohol-Related Incidents: High concentrations of bars and clubs can lead to increased incidents of violence and anti-social behaviour.
Public Disorder: Large crowds can sometimes result in fights or disturbances, especially late at night.
 2. *Drunken Behaviour*
Noise and Disturbances: Drunken behaviour can lead to noise and disturbances, affecting the quality of life for local residents.
Vandalism: There can be an increase in vandalism and property damage due to intoxicated individuals.
 3. *Safety When Getting Home*
Personal Safety: Concerns about personal safety, especially for women and vulnerable individuals, when traveling home late at night.
Transport Availability: Limited availability of safe and reliable transport options late at night can be a concern.
10. Thames Valley Police also strongly agreed to keeping both Special Saturation Policies in the City Centre and East Oxford. Their main concerns regarding the night-time economy were:
Alcohol related crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and nuisance as well as safeguarding of the vulnerable and violence against women and girls (VAWG) stemming from the night-time economy has a significant impact on the police.
It uniquely requires a specific policing operation and additional resources (something that is not done for any other time of the day or day of the week), all of which pulls the police away from our duty to the overall policing of Oxford as a whole and indeed supporting the other areas of the Thames Valley should a critical incident occur.

The further provisions of licensable activities in the area, whether that is through new premises or later hours for alcohol , or late night refreshment

venues/vans which in themselves operate as hot spots for alcohol related violence due to the congregation of intoxicated persons after the clubs and bars have shut, has been shown to exacerbate the significant demand on the police.

It is only through the consistent and robust application of the SSP by the licensing committee that we have seen a move away from such venues, toward attracting more diverse and congenial business models which has gone to help promote Oxford (with its international reputation) as a safe and pleasant place for the public with a vibrant business offer in the NTE. It has also stemmed the ever persistent march towards later and later operating hours of the NTE that was being seen prior to the implementation of the SSP. To lose the policy would be to open the flood gates and undo all of that work.

11. The Authority received seventeen (17) responses from residents of Oxford, five (5) responses from people who work in Oxford, seven (7) responses from local business owners or managers who hold a premises licence, and one (1) response from a local business owner or manager who does not hold a premises licence.
12. Approximately half of these responses strongly disagreed with keeping the Special Saturation Policy areas of both City Centre and East Oxford, with only 15% of responses strongly agreeing.
13. Those that disagreed with keeping the SSP raised concerns that Oxford does not have a thriving night-time economy and that continuing with the policy will lead to multiple businesses closing.
14. Those that agreed with the SSP raised concerns similar to those highlighted by the responsible authorities; drunken behaviour and safety, walking through Oxford at night is threatening, threatening behaviour by drunk people, noise resulting from drunken behaviour.

A copy of all the responses received can be found at **Appendix Two**.

Cumulative Impact Data Analysis

15. The crime data presented, illustrates there has been no significant decrease in relevant crime in Oxford's top four LSOA's (Lower Super Output Area) since the previous SSP was adopted.
16. The violence with injury data correlates closely with the night-time economy, with the heat map concentrating on Friday and Saturday night between 19:00 hours and 03:00 hours.
17. The CCTV data demonstrates significantly more public space incidents during the night-time economy period.
18. The hospital data correlates with the night-time economy, with a concentration of hospital admissions around Friday and Saturday night and 30% of attendances

being alcohol related.

19. While the evidence may not directly attribute crime, disorder, or alcohol-related harm to a specific license premises, it consistently correlates with the night-time economy. This pattern highlights the importance of considering these issues when assessing any new or variation applications within SSP areas. Applicants and decision-makers should take into account the cumulative impact that licensed premises could have on areas already experiencing high levels of night-time economy-related activity.

Duty of the Committee

20. It is the Committee's statutory duty to promote the four licensing objectives set out in the Licensing Act 2003. The four licensing objectives are the legal foundation for all licensing decisions, and as such the authority's legal duty to prevent nuisance, and crime and disorder must be the foremost consideration.
21. Following a request from the Committee, members were provided with a briefing note on the Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) and Special Saturation Policy (SSP). Members then provided additional feedback and questions to the Licensing Authority to inform the development of this report.

A copy of the briefing note can be found at **Appendix Three**.

Conclusion

22. The Licensing Authority has a duty to prevent public nuisance and crime or disorder that may result from a high concentration of licensed premises in one area. For this reason, significant weight is given to the views of responsible authorities, particularly the Police who are the lead agency on crime and disorder matters under the Licensing Act 2003.
23. The Licensing Authority has carefully considered consultation responses opposing the SSP and notes the views that Oxford lacks a thriving night-time economy or that continuing the policy will result in widespread business closures. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the SSP is a factor in this matter. Licensing Authority data shows that there is a regular flow of new applications and variations, with 120 licenses assessed between 2022 and 2025, 52 of which were within SSP areas with one refused.
24. The Licensing Act 2003 requires each application to be assessed on its individual merits, irrespective of whether the premises is within an SSP area. The SSP helps to ensure that new or varied licences are granted with reasonable and robust conditions designed to uphold the licensing objectives. In practice, the applications within SSP areas between 2022 and 2025 were subject to such conditions, usually proposed by the applicant following consultation with Thames Valley Police, the Licensing Authority, or other responsible authorities.
25. There are no other legal tools that work in the same way as the Special Saturation Policy. Without it, the Council's ability to uphold the licensing objectives is reduced,

and there is greater reliance on reacting to problems after they occur, rather than preventing them in the first place.

Without an SSP:

- There is no presumption of refusal, even in areas with high levels of crime, nuisance, or public safety concerns.
- Licensing authorities have less scope to require applicants to address pre-existing issues in the area.
- Applicants are only expected to mitigate the direct impact of their own premises, not the cumulative impact of many premises in close proximity.

With an SSP:

- Applicants must mitigate against the broader context, even if they are new to the area and did not contribute to existing problems.
- This allows the Licensing Authority to impose more tailored conditions or refuse applications that do not sufficiently address the cumulative impact.
- It strengthens the authority's ability to protect residents, manage the night-time economy, and uphold the licensing objectives in high-pressure areas.

26. The Licensing Authority has proposed Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2025-2028 considering all the evidence gathered through the consultation period. The assessment sets out that the authority remains of the opinion that:

“...the number of licensed premises and club premises certificates within the City Centre and East Oxford area is such that it is likely that granting further licences or variation to licences would be inconsistent with the authority’s duty to promote the licensing objectives...”

This statement is a statutory requirement and does not mean that all new or varied applications will be refused; rather, each application will be considered on its own merits, and applicants will be expected to demonstrate robust measures to uphold the licensing objectives in these areas.

The Cumulative Impact Assessment 2025-2028 can be found at **Appendix Four**.

27. The Committee is requested to recommend to Full Council adoption of the Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2025-2028 which retains the Special Saturation Policy covering City Centre and East Oxford areas.

Financial implications

28. The cost for the consultation and analysis of the data for a CIA will be within the existing budget.

Legal issues

29. Any legal implications are contained within the report.

Equality Impact Assessment

30. The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't share it;
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not (which involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding).

31. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

32. When undertaking the Equality Impact Assessment, the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance was used along with legislation and consultation responses.

The Equality Impact Assessment can be found at **Appendix Five**.

Environmental Considerations

33. There are no environmental considerations arising from this report.

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Background Papers:

1	Licensing Act 2003
2	Homepage EHRC

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