

Petition: Royal's Should Respect Residents - "We Hate Noise"

To:

Royal Dry Cleaners
37 Wapping High Street
London, E1W 1NR

(Trading name: Crystal Dry Cleaners Ltd, Company number 07828416)

Location of Concern:

Hermitage Court, Knighten Street, London E1W

Royal Dry Cleaners:

Shopfront on Wapping High Street
Warehouse on Knighten Street

*We, the residents of Hermitage Court and neighbouring properties, are calling on Royal Dry Cleaners ("**Royal**") to urgently address a pattern of ongoing, unacceptable disruption caused by their warehouse and shopfront operations at 37 Wapping High Street (warehouse entrance via Knighten Street).*

Introduction

Royal Dry Cleaners has **expanded** from a local walk-in service into a high-capacity, **industrial-level operation**, utilising the *I Hate Ironing* platform – a company that connects patrons to Dry Cleaning businesses. What was once a small business now runs **multiple machines, employs several workers, and operates a fleet of vans** servicing laundry across London; directly beneath Hermitage Court - a primarily residential building.

Since 2024, the nature, timing, and intensity of Royal's operations have changed dramatically. **Disruption occurs from early in the morning until late into the evening**, causing distress to households on a **daily basis**. The site's use now goes far beyond what is reasonable for a mixed-use residential setting.

This disturbance appears to **breach the Hermitage Court leaseholder restrictions and contravenes Council guidelines** on commercial activity timing. It also raises serious concerns over **fire safety, air quality, and quality of life** for those living above and near the site.

The Petition below addresses the following areas:

- 1) Commercial Lease Rules Breach & Property Value Impact
 - 2) Daily Operational Disruption
 - 3) Excessive Noise, Disturbance and Impact on Residents
 - 4) Health and Safety Risks: Chemical Exposure & Ventilation
 - 5) Fire Risk From Machinery
 - 6) Overnight Charging of EVs in an Unventilated Warehouse
 - 7) Emergency Access Blocked
 - 8) Concerns on Future Expansion
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Commercial Lease Rules Breach & Property Value Impact

According to **Restrictions and Stipulations** in the Hermitage Court warehouse lease, commercial tenants must **NOT**:

"...permit any nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to the landlord or any other occupier of the building or neighbouring property... or do anything which may in the landlord's opinion depreciate the value of the building or neighbouring properties..."

Royal Dry Cleaners appears to be in **breach** of these terms. Residents are subjected to **ongoing nuisance and disturbance**, compromising the **peaceful enjoyment** of their homes.

Moreover, the persistent noise, air pollution, and operational intrusiveness may now be **negatively impacting the desirability and long-term value** of flats within the building. No resident should be forced to tolerate this level of industrial disruption within a residential setting.

! Daily Operational Disruption: Early Morning Until Late Night

Royal Dry Cleaners often begin operations as early as **6:30 - 6:45am on weekdays** and **7:15am on Saturdays**, with activity sometimes continuing late into the evening – even on occasions beyond **11:00pm**. Video evidence has captured workers active during the small hours of the morning, and operations have been observed on **Sundays**, despite this falling outside permitted hours.

While the business appears to have received a **local authority concession** to operate between **7:00am and 6:00pm, Monday to Saturday**, residents were **not consulted**, despite being directly affected. These extended hours already fall outside **standard Council guidelines** for mixed-use buildings and are in **clear breach** of the Hermitage Court commercial lease, which prohibits **excessive noise before 9:00am**.

With activity regularly starting before **7:00am** and continuing well past **6:00pm**, residents endure a **near-constant cycle of disruption**.

🔊 Excessive Noise, Disturbance and Impact on Residents

The daily disruption includes:

- Repeated **slamming of the metal warehouse door**
- A **grinding, squeaking roller shutter** that requires urgent servicing
- **Loud talking and shouting** on Knighten Street by Royal's employees during antisocial hours
- **Electric vehicle movement** (collection/delivery) from 6:30am onwards and well into the evening
- **Unloading and preparation activity** during antisocial hours on Knighten Street
- **Car alarms frequently triggered**
- **Vibrations and noise from machinery** disturbing residents in flats above
- **Increased fumes** rising from the commercial unit into homes

- **Dry cleaning machinery reportedly running unattended, including overnight and on Sundays**, to increase processing volume

This **daily disruption** has a significant impact on residents' sleep, wellbeing, and ability to live peacefully in their homes. Several neighbours, including households **not directly adjacent**, have reported being **regularly disturbed**.

Health and Safety Risks: Chemical Exposure & Ventilation

Royal Dry Cleaners carries out **industrial dry cleaning operations** directly beneath residential flats. These processes commonly involve the use of **chemical solvents** such as perchloroethylene (PERC) - a substance classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as a **probable human carcinogen**.

While specific chemicals used are unconfirmed, the scale and nature of the business raise legitimate concerns about **ventilation, emissions, and long-term exposure for residents** living directly above and around the dry cleaning unit.

- **Health impact** on children, vulnerable individuals, and those with respiratory issues
- **Indoor air quality** and long-term exposure
- The **appropriateness of operating a chemical-intensive business** in a mixed-use residential building

The **increased processing capacity** - new machines were introduced in 2023 - appears to have intensified this problem, contributing to further discomfort and worry among residents.

These operations may also be in **breach of Restrictions and Stipulations** in the Hermitage Court commercial lease, which clearly states:

"No petrol or any other inflammable or dangerous substance shall be stored kept or handled on the premises except such (if any) as is stored kept and handled so as to comply with all statutes regulations any byelaws manufacturers written recommendations and the conditions of the insurers for the time being in force..."

At present, **residents lack clear information** on which chemicals are in use, how they are **stored and ventilated**, and whether current practices meet **safety, environmental, and insurance** standards. This lack of transparency only heightens concern and underscores the urgent need for scrutiny and oversight.

🔥 Fire Risk From Machinery

In addition to possible chemical exposure, the continual use of heavy-duty machinery in a confined residential space introduces a potentially **significant fire risk** and raises questions about **compliance with building safety regulations**. These risks are further compounded by suspected unattended machine use, lack of ventilation, and overnight operation.

⚠️ Overnight Charging of EVs in an Unventilated Warehouse

Multiple **electric vehicles (EVs)** are now stored and charged **overnight** in a **windowless warehouse** space. This occurs **unsupervised**, with no clear ventilation or fire safety measures visible from the outside.

This creates fire and safety concerns, including:

- Potential **overheating or fire risk**
 - **Chemical fume build-up** or **battery gas exposure**
 - **A lack of supervision/mitigating controls** e.g. sprinkler system in case of malfunction or fire
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🚫 Emergency Access Obstruction

The warehouse is directly adjacent to the only residential entrance to Hermitage Court - the **sole route for emergency services**. Daily activity, including **parked vehicles, delivery vans, and staff movements**, may **block this vital access point** in the event of a **fire, medical emergency, or evacuation**.

Under the Hermitage Court leaseholder **Restrictions and Stipulations**, commercial occupants are explicitly required:

"Not to obstruct the entrances leading to the flats in the building, the fire escapes..."

"Not to obstruct or hinder vehicle access to and from the residential car park."

Royal Dry Cleaners' **current operations appear to disregard these conditions** on a routine basis, compromising emergency access and violating the rights of residents to unobstructed, safe, and legally protected movement within their own property.

🔍 **Concerning Future Expansion**

Should Royal Dry Cleaners intend to expand their operations further, we the residents request:

- As part of the **required** license application to the Knighten Street Freehold company, detailed **written proposal and plan** setting out the nature and extent of the changes, including the measures proposed to **mitigate all risks, nuisances and dangers** for Hermitage Court, the surrounding area and the local residents
 - Evidence by way of **detailed written reports** from **qualified** engineers, fire safety, health and safety, and environmental professionals
 - **Formal negotiations with the freehold owners** of Hermitage Court before any action is taken by Royal Dry Cleaners
 - A **legally binding agreement** setting out the agreed position with the freehold owners of Hermitage Court
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Petition Statement

This petition is supported by residents from Hermitage Court and other nearby properties in Wapping who are affected by the ongoing disruption, fumes, noise and safety concerns caused by Royal Dry Cleaners' operations.

We, the undersigned, call on **Royal Dry Cleaners** to:

1. Cease all operations **outside permitted hours**, in line with Council guidance
2. Cease **all Sunday activity**, as required by local Council licensing rules
3. Take immediate action to reduce **disruptive noise and vibration by installing soundproofing** in the shop to protect residents
4. **Maintain the warehouse door and shutter to a high standard** to reduce banging and squeaking sounds
5. **Supervise and risk-assess EV charging** within the warehouse, ensuring it meets safety and ventilation standards
6. **Cease leaving dry cleaning machinery running unattended**, due to fire risk
7. Publicly **disclose all future expansion proposals and plans**, with supporting professional reports and negotiate with the freehold owners in advance of any action by Royal Dry Cleaners

We also urge Royal Dry Cleaners to immediately disclose:

- **The type of chemicals** currently used and stored on site
 - How these are **ventilated and safely contained**
 - Whether their current **operations meet all applicable safety, environmental, and insurance standards**
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Data Protection Note

All personal information collected for this petition will be used solely to present these concerns to the above-listed parties. Your details will not be shared with third parties or used for any other purpose. You may request the removal of your information at any time.

Sign This Petition Online

Please visit the following link to add your name and support:

tinyurl.com/HCRoyalPetition

If you are a resident of Hermitage Court or the surrounding area and wish to sign a hardcopy of the petition, please contact the petition organiser at the email address below.

Contact the Petition Organiser

For further information, media inquiries, or to provide supporting evidence, please email:

hc.royalpetition@outlook.com