APPLICANT RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION REPRESENTATIONS

Planning Application Ref: H16-0923-25 **Site:** The Sessions House, Sheep Market, Spalding, PE11 1BB **Proposal:** Erection of a freestanding, fully reversible outdoor servery unit **Applicant:** Andrew Blach (Castle Events Ltd) **Date:** 20 January 2026

1.0 Introduction

This statement is submitted by the applicant, in response to consultation comments received regarding the above application.

The Sessions House is a significant Grade II listed heritage asset. Its continued preservation relies on its commercial viability as a high-quality venue for weddings, events, and community functions. The proposed outdoor servery is a critical ancillary facility designed to support these uses as well as providing an amenity to the public.

We wish to address the comments from Environmental Protection and the Ward Councillors to clarify misconceptions regarding the operation and to propose robust management conditions that render a refusal or severe restriction unnecessary.

1.1 Operational Stewardship & Management Profile

In light of comments regarding the management of the site, it is relevant to clarify the nature of the applicant's operation. The applicant refutes any suggestion that the site is managed with "scant regard" for the area; on the contrary, the venue is a model of responsible town-centre stewardship:

- **Significant Capital Commitment:** Since acquiring the site, the applicant has committed over **£1.5 million** to the project. This includes a direct cash investment of approximately **£500,000** into the restoration, renovation, and upkeep of the Grade II listed fabric. This level of financial exposure demonstrates a long-term commitment to saving the building from decline and ensuring its success.
- **Community Interest Company (CIC):** Beyond the commercial entity, the applicant has established a CIC to run a community programme. This includes art exhibitions, support for local amateur dramatics, and children's art exhibitions. These are self-funded/loss-making initiatives designed purely for public benefit.
- **Civic Contribution:** The applicant has invested heavily in the public realm, including over £50,000 recently invested in Christmas decorations to enhance the exterior of the building for the benefit of the wider town centre.
- **Operational Excellence:** The venue currently holds a **4.7-star rating on Google Reviews**. This high level of customer satisfaction is indicative of a well-run, safe, and professional environment.
- **Owner-Occupier Status:** The applicant resides on-site at The Sessions House. As a resident, there is a built-in incentive to prevent excessive noise.

2.0 Response to Environmental Protection (Noise & Hours)

Ref: Comment from Diane Gordon (16-01-26)

The Environmental Protection Officer has recommended that the unit be restricted to *"daytime use only"* and *"beverages/take away snack use only."* The applicant objects to the ambiguity of "daytime use" but is willing to offer a specific compromise to resolve this concern.

2.1 Proposed Compromise: Definition of "Daytime" (08:00 – 20:00)

To demonstrate our commitment to protecting residential amenity while maintaining commercial viability, **the applicant is willing to voluntarily accept a condition restricting the serving of alcohol from the outdoor unit to 20:00 hours (8 PM).**

- **Rationale:** This allows the unit to service the "after-work" and early evening trade (crucial for the venue's viability) but ceases operation before the late evening period.
- **Post-20:00 Operation:** After 20:00, the outdoor shutter will be closed.
- We believe **08:00 to 20:00** constitutes a reasonable definition of "Daytime/Early Evening" use in a town centre location.

2.2 Proposed Conditions

We respectfully suggest the following conditions be attached to the permission:

1. **Operating Hours:** The outdoor servery unit shall operate only between the hours of **08:00 and 20:00**
2. **Noise Management:** The business already operates a noise management plan that ensures it checks at regular intervals the sound levels at the perimeter boundary and then takes any actions necessary to manage within acceptable and historic noise levels.

3.0 Response to Councillor Hasan

Ref: Objection regarding "Intensification" and "Complaints"

3.1 Response to "Numerous Complaints"

The objection refers to "numerous complaints." The applicant operates a strict internal log of all events and perimeter noise checks.

- We have requested data via Freedom of Information and understand that while unsubstantiated planning complaints have been made in the past, previous investigations (by Conservation Officers) found no breach of planning control or statutory nuisance.
- We hold no record of any other complaints received. We note that neither Licensing nor Environmental Health have raised concerns regarding historical complaints.
- We question why these alleged issues are only being raised now in relation to a planning application. If substantiated nuisance issues existed, we would expect them to have been brought to our attention by the relevant authorities previously to allow for remedial action.

- We would note that we have proactively invited Cllr Hasan to visit the venue on two occasions to discuss operations and plans. These invitations have not been taken up. We therefore do not believe these complaints are material nor can they be substantiated.

3.2 Intensification of Use

The objection raises concerns regarding "intensification." We would argue that this intensification is positive and strategic:

1. **Heritage Viability:** The revenue generated is required to maintain this heritage asset, without which it is at risk of failing.
2. **Economic Vitality:** The footfall serves as a net benefit to Spalding Town Centre. The town is in need of investment and high-quality hospitality options to drive the evening economy. The diversification of the high street offer beyond standard retail should be supported by the Council to ensure the long-term success of the Sheep Market area.

4.0 Response to Cllr LeSage

4.1 Response to Cllr LeSage (Private Dispute vs Planning Merit)

We note the objection from Cllr LeSage. While he is a Ward Member for Spalding St John's, we understand he is submitting this objection in his private capacity as the owner of a neighboring property.

It is important to highlight that a significant portion of his representation focuses on historical grievances, specifically a **"container to the right hand side"** of the building.

- **Context:** This refers to a temporary storage unit utilized during the restoration of the Grade II listed building. This is a temporary operational necessity and the subject of a private dispute. It is not part of this application.
- **Personal Grievance:** The objection appears to be motivated by this historic personal annoyance rather than the material planning impacts of the proposed servery.
- **Relevance:** We respectfully submit that personal grievances regarding temporary works are not material planning considerations. The application should be judged on its own merits—specifically the design and acoustic impact of the servery—rather than unrelated historical disputes.
- We should also note that his personal complaint on the container was reviewed in a site visit by the planning team who were understanding to our position of this being a temporary and necessary construct to support the ongoing restorative investment we are making in the building.

4.2 Procedural Context & Engagement

We refute the suggestion that the applicant has shown "scant disregard" for the planning process.

- **Pre-Application Engagement:** We submitted a formal pre-application enquiry (Ref: PE-00186-25), noting that there was a delay (12 weeks) in receiving a response.
- **Proactive Communication:** Prior to the installation of the freestanding, fully reversible servery, we contacted the Conservation Officer to inform them of our intent to submit a retrospective application to meet critical Christmas trading deadlines while respecting the spirit of the regulations.
- **Signage:** We are currently working through the signage application with the planning team.
- **Open Door Policy:** We have extended multiple invitations to council members and the planning team to visit The Sessions House to discuss our plans. We remain committed to proactive engagement.

5.0 Response to Spalding & District Civic Society

Ref: Comment on Materials and Retrospective Nature

5.1 Design & Materials

We acknowledge the comment regarding materials. Following pre-application advice, the proposal is for the structure to be clad in high-quality vertical timber to soften its appearance and respect the heritage setting. We are happy to accept a condition requiring the submission of material samples. **The applicant commits to installing the approved cladding subsequent to the granting of planning permission.**

5.2 Retrospective Application

While the application is retrospective, Section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 specifically allows for such applications. The application should be determined on its planning merits—principally design and amenity—rather than penalized for its retrospective nature.

6.0 Strategic Alignment: Town Centre Regeneration

Ref: Spalding Town Centre Improvement Plan & Local Plan Policy

The proposal directly supports the broader strategic goals for Spalding Town Centre as a destination for high-quality hospitality and leisure.

- **Unique Heritage Offering:** The proposal introduces a unique 'al fresco' experience within a secure heritage courtyard—an offering currently unmatched by other venues in Spalding. This differentiation creates a competitive advantage for the town centre itself, attracting visitors and retaining local spend that might otherwise migrate to larger cities.
- **Vitality and Viability (NPPF & Local Plan):** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan* emphasize the need to support the "vitality and viability" of town centres. The Sessions House acts as an "Anchor Tenant" for the Sheep Market, driving footfall that benefits the wider area.
- **Economic Contradiction:** It is inconsistent with the wider economic agenda of Spalding, South Holland and the wider County—which rightly emphasizes the urgent need for fiscal

responsibility, debt reduction, and commercial growth—for local representatives to obstruct viable, tax-generating businesses based on unsubstantiated concerns.

- **Post-Covid Hospitality:** The provision of high-quality, managed outdoor spaces is now a standard expectation for premium hospitality venues. Refusal of such facilities puts the venue at a competitive disadvantage, threatening the revenue streams required to maintain the Grade II listed asset.

7.0 Conclusion

The proposed servery is a reversible, high-quality addition that supports the economic viability of a key heritage asset. The concerns regarding noise are best managed through a robust **Noise Management Plan** and conditions prohibiting outdoor amplified music.

To demonstrate good faith and cooperation, the applicant is willing to accept a condition restricting the **operational hours of the servery unit to 08:00 – 20:00**.

We respectfully request that the application be approved with these conditions.