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PLANNING STATEMENT

The Lighthouse Pentecostal Church

18-19 Broad Street, Spalding, PE11 1TB

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Full Planning Application for the change of use from retail (Class E (a)) to mixed use, comprising of ancillary retail, café, play space, offices (Class E), Church (Class F1) and a community meeting place (Class F2) and food bank (Sui Generis)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Aspbury Planning Ltd on behalf of The Lighthouse Pentecostal Church ("the Applicant") in support of a Full Planning Application for the change of use from retail (Class E (a)) to mixed use, comprising of ancillary retail, café, play space, offices (Class E), Church (Class F1) and a community meeting place (Class F2) and foodbank (Sui Generis) ("the Proposals") at 18-19 Broad Street, Spalding, PE11 1TB ("the Site").
- 1.2 This Application follows pre-application discussions with South Holland District Council and takes into consideration the comments received.
- 1.3 The Lighthouse Church in Spalding is a registered charity and has been an established member of the local community for more than 50 years, throughout which it has supported the Council and the people of Spalding by providing a number of facilities and activities for supporting and bringing the community together.
- 1.4 The primary function of the Lighthouse is a Church, with a congregation of approximately 300 members. Many of the members volunteer to help with the services provided such as the food bank, youth club, senior citizen groups and mother and baby clubs that operate from the site on Haverfield Road.
- 1.5 The popularity of the Lighthouse Church has led to an increase in members and they have now had to adapt their Sunday Church meetings, moving from one to two Church services on a Sunday morning in order to accommodate the congregation which has grown exponentially.
- 1.6 The Lighthouse Church has outgrown its current premises on Haverfield Road and has seen an increased need for the food bank, debt support and a warm space to shelter, which are facing more demand as a result of the cost of living crisis. The current location has limited parking and results in overspill onto the surrounding streets, causing on-street parking pressure.
- 1.7 The Lighthouse Church is committed to helping the community it serves and has created a business case with the project vision to move the Church out of its current venue and into a larger and more accessible location in the town centre. Number 18/19 Broad Street will allow the Church to broaden the activities and services it is able to provide and be more accessible in the town centre, close to public car parks and public transport.
- 1.8 The size and layout of the building will allow the different uses provided by the Church to be split and run independently whilst creating an income revenue to help the Church to continue providing the much needed support to the community of Spalding. (Please refer to the Business Case provided separately).

- 1.9 This Statement describes the Site and its surroundings (Section 2), the relevant site history (Section 3), the Pre-application Advice (Section 4), the Development Proposals (Section 5), the Planning Policy Framework (Section 6), an assessment of the Proposal against the Policy Framework (Section 7) followed by the conclusion (Section 8).
- 1.10 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the following supporting information submitted with this Application:
- Plans and Drawings prepared by Rimmington Building Design & Consultancy;
 - Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Aspbury Planning; and
 - Lighthouse Church Business Case.

2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

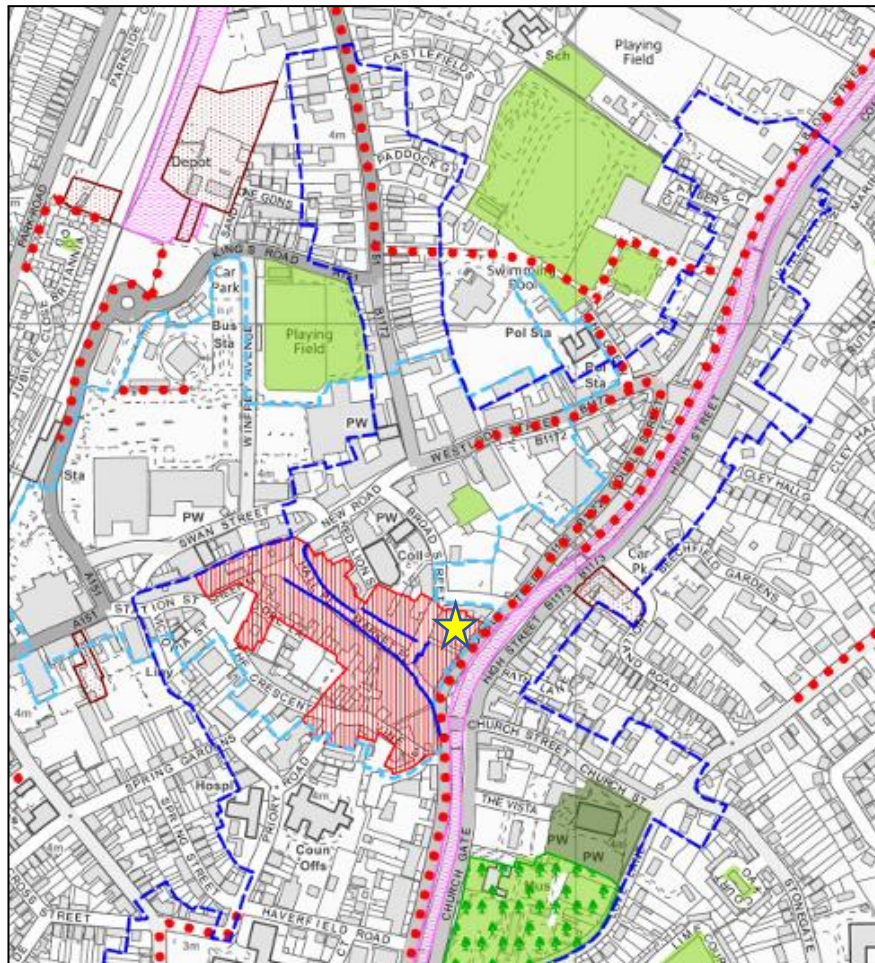
- 2.1 The Site is located within the settlement boundaries of Spalding, as outlined in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036, adopted in 2019 (SELLP). The Site is within the town centre but not located on the 'Primary Shopping Frontage'; however it does sit within the designated Conservation Area (see Figure 1 below) and within Flood Zone 3 of the Environment Agency's Flood Maps. (Please refer to the Flood Risk Assessment provided separately).
- 2.2 The building is currently vacant and was last used as a retail store, operating as Coneys Department Store, who closed their doors in May 2023 following a rise in costs and a decline in sales¹. The building has been marketed with Pygott and Crone² and is one of five large, empty buildings in the town centre.
- 2.3 The building is arranged over three floors comprising of ground, first and second floor, previously used for retail, restaurant, stores and staff facilities. The total floor area is 1392 sq m (14,983 sq ft) with large display windows along Broad Street and along the alleyway leading to Double Street. At the rear of the building is a car park for five vehicles and the service/delivery area.
- 2.4 The building has been extended to the rear, comprising of a contemporary addition with large glazed areas, a ramp and raised platform used for outdoor seating to complement the former restaurant/bar use.

¹ <https://www.spaldingtoday.co.uk/news/fears-store-closure-could-be-final-nail-in-the-coffin-for-9315311/>

² <https://www.pygott-crone.com/properties/sales/10356315/>

- 2.5 Broad Street lies outside of the defined 'Primary Shopping Frontage' but provides a route from Herring Road public car park to Market Place, the centre of the town. Swan Beauty and Elderkin & Son Gunmakers make up the commercial premises on Broad Street.
- 2.6 South Holland Centre sits adjacent to the Site on Market Place. It is a substantial contemporary building providing a theatre, cinema and function venue and houses the Tourist Information Centre.

Figure 1: Spalding Insert Map – South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (star marks the Site)



3.0 SITE HISTORY

- 3.1 According to South Holland District Council's online planning portal, there have been no recent planning applications submitted for the building/site. The planning search returned the following applications covering a period between 2004 – 2007.

- H16-0246-07 Siting of 4 fixed banners (retrospective) – Refused and dismissed at Appeal 26/02/07
- H16-0936-05 New automatic doors to replace existing doors - Approved 12/07/05
- H16-0937-05 Erection of fascia signs to Elevations A, B and C - Approved 12/07/05
- H16-0553-05 Removal of display window and door, block up and render - Refused 26/04/05
- H16-0475-05 Reposition door and window – Approved 11/04/05
- H16-1580-04 Details of external materials (Condition 2 of H16/1232/04) – Approved 30/11/04
- H16-1232-04 Proposed alterations and extension – Approved 17/09/04
- H16-637-79 Extension (no 18) to Department Store – Approved November 1979

3.2 There are historic records pertaining to the demolition of the former Greyhound Hotel and building of a department store in 1975 (Ref: H16/0023/75), formerly Hills Department Store and latterly named as Coneys Department Store.

4.0 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE ENQUIRY

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 40 advises that Local Planning Authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. At paragraph 41 it is acknowledged that: *"...the more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits."*
- 4.2 Written Pre-Application Advice was received which outlined the Development Plan Policies a Church would be assessed against and advised that justification for the loss of the retail unit would be required.
- 4.3 The Officer considered that the Site may be unsuitable for the proposed use as a place of worship and suggested that an alternative site, outside of the primary shopping area may be more appropriate. The advice received stated that if an application for 18/19 Broad Street as a place of worship was submitted, it must be demonstrated that the proposal would not harm the character of the area, while also enhancing the primary retail use.
- 4.4 Since receipt of the formal written advice, the project aims have been refocused and careful consideration of how the Church can fulfil its vision to support the community and meet the needs of its members, and also complement the current town centre offering, has informed this Development Proposal.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The Application Proposal comprises a change of use from a vacant retail store to a mixed use, comprising ancillary retail, café, play space, offices (Class E), Church (Class F1) and a community meeting place (Class F2) and foodbank (Sui Generis).
- 5.2 The building's layout and composition over three floors allows for a range of different uses to run concurrently to or independently from one another.
- 5.3 The ground floor provides an entrance with a manned reception area and the large space will be divided into zones to allow for a variety of activities to support families. A children's soft play area and café facility will sit at the front of the building with youth areas to the rear to support the youth club activities provided by the Lighthouse Church. WCs and baby changing facilities are to be provided in the reception area for ease of access by visitors to the facility. Placing the café facility to the front of the building will provide an active street frontage which will be visible through the large shop front windows on Broad Street, which will continue to contribute to the prevailing character of the town centre. The revenue created will help to fund the services provided by the Lighthouse Church.
- 5.4 The food bank will operate from the rear of the building with access only permitted from the car park area off Double Street. The dedicated space allows a greater storage capacity for food donated by the community/businesses allowing the charity to support a greater number of people in need. The cost of living crisis has seen an increase in demand for the food bank services and a larger facility will allow the Church to meet the demand.
- 5.5 The first floor will have another reception area and a bookstore selling literature supporting the Christian teachings, raising additional funds for the Church and provide a large multi-functioning space. The larger floor space will allow the Lighthouse Church to operate its primary function to its 300 strong congregation whilst providing a space to run training courses, debt management advice, drug awareness support, family/marriage support, Christian teaching etc., and storage facility.
- 5.6 The third floor has a much smaller footprint and will be used as office space with a smaller function room for more intimate gatherings and storage.
- 5.7 There are no changes to the external appearance of the building. New signage reflecting the Lighthouse Church logo will be subject to a formal Advertisement Consent.

6.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND OTHER POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The Development Plan

6.2 The Development Plan for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 (adopted 2019).

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 (Adopted March 2019)

6.3 The relevant policies to the development proposal are considered to be:

- Policy 01 - Spatial Strategy
- Policy 02 - Development Management
- Policy 03 - Design of New Development
- Policy 24 - The Retail Hierarchy
- Policy 25 - Supporting the Vitality and Viability of Boston and Spalding Town Centres
- Policy 29 - The Historic Environment
- Policy 32 - Community, Health and Well-being
- Policy 36 - Vehicle and Cycle Parking
- APPENDIX 6 - Parking Standards

6.4 Other Material Considerations

6.5 Spalding Conservation Area Appraisal - The Conservation Area was designated in 1970 and was extended in 1975.

6.6 There are no relevant SPDs/SPGs for consideration of this Proposal.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

6.7 Applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise and, in this respect, the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF was first published on 27 March 2012 and revised in 2018, 2019, 2021 and most recently on 5 September 2023. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

6.8 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. There are three dimensions to sustainable development that give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in

mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

6.9 To promote sustainable development, the NPPF advises that these objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

6.10 **Paragraph 11** advises that Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:

"c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

- ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."*

- 6.11 **Paragraph 38** states that Local Planning Authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 6.12 **Paragraph 81** advises that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. It goes on to say that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 6.13 **Paragraph 86** advises that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. It sets out a number of criteria to promote the viability of towns, including a hierarchical approach, defining primary shopping areas, and seeking to retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introducing or creating new ones.
- 6.14 **Paragraph 92** seeks to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and to do this it advises the promotion of social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other. Mixed-use developments is one of the examples of how this may be achieved.
- 6.15 **Paragraph 93** advises that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, **meeting places**, sports venues, open space, **cultural buildings**, public houses and **places of worship** (my emphasis added)).
- 6.16 **Paragraph 111** advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

- 6.17 **Paragraph 119** states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- 6.18 **Paragraph 130** establishes that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- 6.19 **Paragraph 167** seeks to ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere by the development and promotes the use of sustainable drainage schemes where appropriate.
- 6.20 **Paragraph 168** advises that applications for some minor development and changes of use should not be subject to the sequential or exception tests but should still meet the requirements for site-specific flood risk assessments.
- 6.21 **Paragraph 194** requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
- 6.22 **Paragraph 197** advises that when determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- “(a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
(b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
(c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”
- 6.23 **Paragraph 199** continues, stating that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

- 6.24 **Paragraph 201** states that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

*“(a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
(b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
(c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
(d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.”*

- 6.25 **Paragraph 202** goes on to advise that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

- 6.26 **Paragraph 203** advises that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 6.27 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was first issued on 28 August 2013 to provide supporting practice guidance and clarity to the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.28 In preparing Local Plans and taking decisions, local planning authorities need to consider and have regard to planning practice guidance issued by the Government, which is a material consideration of some weight. However, it is for the decision-taker to determine the weight of this guidance in any individual decisions.
- 6.29 An update to the NPPG was issued on 1 October 2019 and introduces the **Design: process and tools** which replaces the previous guidance on design. The guidance is to be read alongside the National Design Guide which sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. It sets out ten

characteristics to assist those involved in shaping places including in plan-making and decision-making.

Statutes

- 6.30 Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("P(LBCA)A 1990") requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
- 6.31 The remainder of this Planning Statement will assess the Proposal against the relevant policies identified in Section 6 above in order to demonstrate that the proposal is wholly compliant with the Development Plan and the 'framework' when taken as a whole and supports sustainable development objectives, which include economic, social and environmental benefits.

7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT AND JUSTIFICATION

- 7.1 Having regard to the Site's local context and the relevant national and local planning policies outlined above, the planning issues raised by these proposals would appear to be:

- i) the principle of development;
- ii) impact of the use upon the vitality of the town centre; and
- iii) impact of the use upon the character of the Conservation Area.

7.2 Principle of Development

- 7.3 The starting point in the determination of every planning application is Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act which states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a key material planning consideration in reaching planning decisions.
- 7.4 The Site is located within the designated Primary Shopping Area for Spalding Town but not located on the Primary Shopping Frontage as defined by the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (SELLP) Policy 26. It is however within the designated Conservation Area and an assessment is required of the impact of the proposed use upon these designations.

- 7.5 SELLP Policy 24 seeks to locate retail and other main town centre uses within the towns of Boston and Spalding. The aim of the Policy is to support retail, food and drink outlets, financial and professional services, leisure and tourist-related uses and residential development (A1-A5, B1, D1 & D2 Use Classes³) to promote the vitality of the town. The policy also supports the provision of markets and other appropriate initiatives that would enhance the vitality and viability of Boston and Spalding town centres.
- 7.6 In supporting the vitality and viability of Spalding town centre, the text to Policy 25 states that the policy is an enabling policy to encourage town centres to evolve. Its objective is to keep town centres in the spotlight for opportunities for retail, entertainment, commerce and activity where shops, businesses, restaurants and events continue to attract significant numbers of people⁴.
- 7.7 SELLP Policy 25 therefore seeks to support Spalding town centre to continue to be a primary destination for retail, entertainment, markets and events. The Policy sets out a number of objectives to promote appropriate opportunities to support and extend the offer of the town centre as destination. One of the objectives is to enhance existing sites and ensure changes to premises have regard to the significance of heritage assets and the special interests of the Conservation Areas and their settings.
- 7.8 Whilst the Local Plan policies seek to retain the A1-A5, B1, D1 and D2 Use Classes, the amended Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 (UCO) came into effect on 1 September 2020 and combined the uses classes. The Application Site now falls within Class E of Part A, Schedule 2. Nonetheless the objectives of the Policy would align with the NPPF in protecting town centres from inappropriate uses.
- 7.9 NPPF paragraph 86 seeks to promote the long-term viability of town centres, allowing them to grow and diversify in a manner that responds to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries and allows for a suitable mix of uses that respects their distinctive characters. Since the Global Pandemic, the retail and hospitality sectors have been particularly impacted as a result of behaviour change and now also have market pressures as a result of the downturn in the economy. To prevent town centres become 'dead spaces' it is necessary to adapt to the changing markets and recognise that there will be a decline in the need for large retail spaces.

³ The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 1997

⁴ Para. 6.3.1 South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-36

- 7.10 It should be noted that the amended UCO provides a clear reflection of a move by the Government towards greater flexibility in the range of uses to be encouraged in town centres. The Proposal is seeking to utilise an existing vacant building for a mixed use comprising café and soft play area, youth club, offices and a place of worship. These uses, now falling within Class E and Class F, would be compatible with the town centre use and the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, and the principle of the proposal should be regarded as acceptable.
- 7.11 SELLP Policy 32 and Section 8 of the NPPF relate to community, health, and wellbeing. The Pre-application response acknowledged that the proposal would enhance the community assets available in the town and that the central location would enable more users to have access, and therefore, enhance the community benefits further. This should weigh in favour of the proposal as the use will provide many community benefits as outlined in the Business Case.

Impact upon the Vitality of the Town Centre

- 7.12 The Lighthouse Church is a registered charity that not only has a strong congregation of approximately 300 members, it has also assisted other organisations, such as the District and County Council, to deliver services to vulnerable groups of people who reside in Spalding. No 18-19 Broad Street is of a suitable size and more importantly appropriately located in the town to deliver its services. There is also an opportunity to provide a partnership with the Police to tackle anti-social behaviour issues within the town in the future.
- 7.13 The ground floor of the building would be predominantly used to provide a soft play area and café operating Monday to Saturday between the hours of 9:30-16:30 and be available for private hire on a Sunday. The youth and children's clubs will provide activities during school holidays and evenings giving the youth of Spalding somewhere to go, providing a safe place.
- 7.14 The use of the ground floor will provide an active street frontage which would not be out of keeping with the character of the town and is an appropriate use in this location. There was already a café/restaurant use operating within the former Coneys Department Store. The additional proposed uses will provide a facility for families to visit and enjoy whilst visiting the town. The increase in footfall will help to simulate the town's economy as it would be expected to lead to linked trips with visitors utilising the other shops and facilities on offer.

- 7.15 Whilst not located on the Primary Shopping Frontage it is acknowledged that the Site does fall on the edge of the primary shopping area. As stipulated above the ground floor use would be a compatible use in the town. The pre-app response raised concerns over the use of the building as a church; however, a place of worship, under its former use classification D1, would have been compatible with SELLP Policy 24. The church services will operate on a Sunday on the first floor and will not have any impact upon the character of the area as it will not be readily visible. The only indication of a church will be from the organisation's signage.
- 7.16 Notwithstanding the above it is acknowledged that it would be the Council's preference to retain the retail unit. As mentioned above, central Government have amended the use class order and introduced new permitted development rights to stimulate the economy and promote different uses in the town. Since the Global Pandemic, there has been a change in behaviour with a shift to online shopping and home working. Spalding town centre has four other empty retail units located on the 'Primary Shopping Frontage'. These units have been empty for a considerable time with no operator coming forward. There is currently no Article 4 Direction designated in the town centre and therefore retail units are not safeguarded from landlords exercising permitted development rights to convert to residential. The loss of retail units, therefore, would not amount to a definitive rejection of the proposal and the benefits conferred by the Proposal need to be weighed in the balance.
- 7.17 Whilst the building is not on the Primary Shopping Frontage, the corner of the building is glimpsed from the Market Place. There will be no change to the external appearance and the proposed change of use is capable of responding to SELLP Policies 24, 25 and 26. The proposed use will still allow for an active ground floor use that is compatible with the town centre and will also utilise the upper floors for community uses as outlined in the business case, which are also appropriate in the town centre.
- 7.18 Whilst it is established that the proposed operations of the charity from the site fall within appropriate town centre use, the charity also operates a food bank which will be run from the rear of the building with access from Double Street. The use could be considered to fall under sui generis use and not therefore a specific town centre use; however, the town centre location, with its good access by public transport, would help the charity to reach a wider catchment allowing those that do not have access to a vehicle to visit by public transport.
- 7.19 The existing car park is accessed from Double Street and as there is a suitable entrance to the rear of the building, no modifications are required for the operation of the food bank. With the exception of the charity's logo, the facility will be discreetly located away from the

main town centre allowing those that need to use the food bank to visit discreetly should they choose to and preventing users from congregating at the front of the building.

- 7.20 The centre is intended to be open on the evenings of Thursday-Saturday between the hours of 21:30-02:00 to provide a safe place for vulnerable people, helping relieve the pressure from emergency services in the town responding to distress calls/incidents. The charity has volunteer 'Street Pastors' looking out for people who need assistance in getting home or to a place of refuge until able to get home safely.
- 7.21 Unlike retail stores, the building will be actively used throughout the day and evenings with various clubs and support groups in operation, such as mum and baby meets, social groups for the elderly, youth clubs, after-school clubs etc., all encouraging social interaction and tackling isolation and loneliness, contributors to mental health issues.
- 7.22 SELLP Policy 32 seeks for development to contribute to the creation of socially-cohesive and inclusive communities and to help reduce health inequalities to improve the community's health and well-being. This goes to the heart of the ethos of the Lighthouse Church whose vision statement is "Find Purpose, Make a Difference".
- 7.23 Whilst the Pre-App response was not in favour of a place of worship operating from a former retail unit. The vision and project aim of the charity has evolved: it will first and foremost operate as church but very much focused on supporting the community of Spalding in a variety of ways. As a mixed-use development falling predominantly in Use Class E and F, a town centre location is suitable and conforms with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and the Government's objective to give greater flexibility in town centres.
- 7.24 Whilst each application is to be determined on its own merits, the Inspector, when considering the loss of a retail unit located on the Primary Shopping Frontage to a gaming facility, found that it did not undermine the vitality of the town⁵. The Development Proposal, as outlined above, would bring about many community benefits that outweigh any limited harm the loss of a retail unit would have.
- 7.25 The increase in footfall to the town is appropriate and could lead to an increase in patrons for other businesses in the town and increase revenue to the Council from public car park usage whilst supporting public transport operators.

⁵ Appeal Ref: APP/A2525/W/21/3285049 - 32-33 Hall Place, SPALDING PE11 1SG

Impact upon the Character of the Conservation Area

- 7.26 SELLP Policy 29 and Section 16 of the NPPF relate to the preservation of the historic environment. Paragraphs 197, 199, 200, 201, 202 and 206 seek to ensure that development does not have a detrimental impact upon designated heritage assets.
- 7.27 The Conservation Area was designated in 1970 and was extended in 1975 and captures the historic town centre: Market Place, Hall Place and Sheep Market and most of the historic settlement which straddles both sides of the River Welland and later Victorian residential development on Pinchbeck Road.
- 7.28 As the site is within the Spalding Conservation Area and is adjacent to a Grade II Listed Building (no.17) an assessment of the impacts is required, the level of detail of which should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.
- 7.29 Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 189 – 208) sets out the policies for conservation of the historic environment. Paragraph 200 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
- 7.30 In their guidance note 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Advice Note 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets' (Second Edition, December 2017), Historic England sets out a stepped approach to assess the impact a development may have on the setting of any heritage assets. This approach includes the identification of heritage assets that may be affected, assessment of the significance of their setting and the impact of the development in it and exploring ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm in proportion to the significance of the asset.
- 7.31 The NPPF makes it clear that the 'setting' of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral (NPPF – Annex 2: Glossary).
- 7.32 The building occupies a corner plot on Broad Street and footway linking to Double Street to the rear of the site. The large contemporary South Holland Centre sits on the opposite side of the footway and is the most visible of the two buildings when viewed from Market Place. Number 18-19 Broad Street is only glimpsed from the town; however, this viewpoint will

not be altered by the proposed new use of the building. The size and scale of the Application Site is not appreciated until viewed from Broad Street.

- 7.33 There is to be no change to the external appearance of the building apart from new signage representing the Lighthouse Church. The current fascia will be sign written with Lighthouse corporate lettering and colours and the logo will be displayed in one of the windows close to the corner entrance as a window transfer. All signage will be subject to a formal advertisement consent once planning permission has been secured for the change of use.
- 7.34 The repurposing of the building for the proposed use, as with a retail use, will attract a high footfall. However, it is considered that the proposed use will amount to neutral impact upon the Conservation Area designation and will not have any greater impact upon the setting of any nearby listed building. Consequently, the proposed use would accord with SELLP policies 24, 25 and 29. These seek, inter alia, to support initiatives that ensure changes that have regard to the significance of heritage assets and for development to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The Development Proposal is seeking to change the use of an existing, vacant, purpose-built retail department store in the town centre to provide support and facilities to the community of Spalding. As outlined in the Applicant's Business Case, the Lighthouse Church is delivering important services to the community, as shown by its increase in members and users of the various services it offers.
- 8.2 Spalding Town, like many other market towns, is suffering a decline in footfall and loss of operators from the town centre. Alongside the Application Site there are four other vacant retail premises on the Primary Shopping Frontage, which are of varying sizes. Commercial confidence is at a low as a result of high costs and inflation.
- 8.3 To promote and revitalise town centres the Government has introduced a change to the Use Class regulations⁶ to promote flexibility and issued permitted development rights allowing retail units to change to residential under a prior approval notice. Whilst this could be an option for number 18-19 Broad Street, it does not fit with the objectives of the Lighthouse Church as a charity.

⁶ Town and Country Planning (Use Class) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020

- 8.4 The Development Proposal will create employment and training opportunities in hospitality, reception and professional services and will be complemented by volunteering opportunities. A large base will assist the charity to fulfil its mission to support a greater number of residents, help with the mental health and wellbeing of the community and increase their range of support.
- 8.5 Having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan and the Framework, which emphasise a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', it is considered that the case has been made and the scheme as proposed should therefore be permitted without delay. Should there be any issues raised which require further input we would appreciate being given the opportunity to respond.



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