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Planning Statement

Site Address:

The Hammered Craft Beer Shop,
2 The Arcade,
Hitchin,
SG5 1ED

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a retrospective planning application for the change of use of the premises at 2 The Arcade, Hitchin, from Class E (Café) to Sui Generis (Drinking Establishment). The application seeks to regularise the existing use of the property, which has been operating as a bar under the trading name The Hammered Craft Beer Shop.
- 1.2** The purpose of this statement is to outline the background of the site, the nature of the existing use, and to demonstrate that the proposal complies with relevant local and national planning policies and causes no harm to local amenity, the character of the area, or neighbouring uses.

2.0 Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1** The premises is located within The Arcade, a covered pedestrian shopping passage situated in Hitchin town centre. The locality is characterised by a mixture of small independent retail units, cafés, and service-based businesses at ground floor level, with no immediate residential dwellings adjoining the unit.
- 2.2** 2 The Arcade forms part of this established commercial environment and benefits from good accessibility via public transport and local parking facilities. The property has an active premises licence (No. 16173) issued by North Hertfordshire District Council, authorising the sale of alcohol for consumption on and off the premises within agreed hours.

3.0 Background and Existing Use

- 3.1** The property was previously occupied by Rose Bud Café, which operated as a traditional eat-in café under Class E use. Approximately one year prior to the current leaseholder taking over in April 2025, the previous operator converted the business to a small bar-style use without formal planning permission.
- 3.2** The current occupier has continued the use as The Hammered Craft Beer Shop, operating as a bar offering a range of craft and locally produced beers in a relaxed and sociable environment. The premises holds a valid premises licence (Licence No. 16173) issued by North Hertfordshire District Council.
- 3.3** The business operates under the following hours:
- 3.4 Monday:** Closed
- 3.4.1 Tuesday to Saturday:** 11:00am – 00:30am
- 3.4.2 Sunday and Bank Holidays:** 11:00am – 7:00pm
- 3.5** These hours are in accordance with the premises licence and have been managed responsibly, with no complaints or enforcement history since the business began operating.
- 3.6** The bar has established a positive reputation locally, receiving strong support from the community and neighbouring businesses. The operation remains modest in scale and compatible with the character of The Arcade.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

- 4.1** The application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the **North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011–2031)** and the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)**.
- 4.1.1 NPPF (2023)** encourages the promotion of vibrant and mixed-use town centres and supports leisure and cultural activities that contribute to the local economy.
- 4.1.2 Local Plan Policy ETC6** promotes town centre uses that enhance vitality and viability.
- 4.1.3 Policies D1 (Sustainable Design) and D3 (Protecting Living Conditions)** ensure that new or existing uses maintain local character and protect amenity.
- 4.2** The continued operation of The Hammered Craft Beer Shop aligns with these objectives by supporting a diverse and thriving town centre economy, reusing an existing commercial unit, and offering a well-managed, small-scale evening venue.

5.0 Assessment of Impact

5.1 Character and Appearance

- 5.1.1** No external alterations have been made as part of the change of use. The appearance of the unit within The Arcade remains unchanged, preserving the visual character of the town centre and maintaining the established pattern of commercial activity.

5.2 Amenity

- 5.2.1** The premises operates under a clearly defined management plan and within licensed hours. Given the absence of nearby residential units, the use has minimal potential for noise or disturbance. The operator maintains responsible trading practices, including control of customer behaviour and noise levels upon closing. The Council's Environmental Health and Licensing Teams have raised no concerns since the business began operating.

5.3 Economic and Community Contribution

- 5.3.1** The Hammered Craft Beer Shop contributes positively to Hitchin's independent business network and evening economy. The venue provides local employment, supports local suppliers, and enhances consumer choice. Its community-focused ethos and customer support reflect the value it adds to the local social and economic landscape.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1** This retrospective application seeks to regularise the continued lawful use of 2 The Arcade, Hitchin as a Sui Generis drinking establishment. The premises has operated responsibly since April 2025, with no adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers or the character of the area.
- 6.2** The proposal accords with the aims of both the NPPF and North Hertfordshire Local Plan by promoting sustainable town centre activity, supporting local enterprise, and maintaining a vibrant mix of uses.
- 6.3** Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that North Hertfordshire District Council grant retrospective planning permission for the change of use from Class E (Café) to Sui Generis (Drinking Establishment).