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Dear chair and members of the planning committee, and Mr Peres Da Costa,

I hope you're all well. I'm writing urgently on behalf of the Black Cap Foundation about an application that we've just become aware of and seek an opportunity to comment on before the committee makes any decision.

The application, number 2018/4031/P, relates to 171 Camden High Street, the Black Cap pub and cabaret bar. It was made by Icen Projects on behalf of Faucet Inn in late August and seeks a certificate of lawful use. In particular it seeks to clarify which part or parts of the building are of mixed pub and cabaret use (sui generis) as opposed to standard pub (A4).

As you know, the Black Cap is a historic and world-famous pub and centre of LGBTQ+ social life and drag and cabaret performance. It was closed suddenly in 2015, shortly after having its status as an asset of community value confirmed. The closure was widely deplored, including by the Council, and since then we and others have worked hard to bring about its re-opening. The sui generis use classification, along with the ACV status and the strength of community support, has throughout this time been one of the crucial protections for the venue and has been repeatedly referred to by councillors seeking to reassure the community that the Black Cap's character will be preserved. Meanwhile the building's owner has on various occasions privately and publicly referred to the sui generis use, and the requirement for the Black Cap to remain a cabaret venue, as an obstacle or problem.

We don't accuse the applicant of anything underhand or improper in making this application and we too would welcome clarification of the extent of the sui generis use. But we strongly disagree with the applicant's contention that the ground floor alone has a mixed pub and cabaret use. This issue is clearly crucial to the future of the Black Cap and the prospect of its reopening as the thriving and unique centre of LGBTQ+ performance, culture, and leisure that is so important to so many of us (including nearly 13,000 petition signatories).

We have considerable experience, knowledge, and evidence of the building's use going back ten years and more, and the committee can only benefit from hearing our representations. We would certainly have come forward before now if we had known about the application. In fact we are sad to have learned about this application by chance from a member of the public rather than from the owner, the Council, or indeed any of the automated alerts that we've set up to try to remain informed about relevant matters - to which the planning section of the Council's website seems to be immune. It's unclear to us whether there was or will be any formal consultation or period for comment but in any event we urge the committee to exercise its discretion to allow us a reasonable opportunity to make representations. If the applicant truly wants to clarify the matter and leave no further doubt, there can surely be no objection to our placing further evidence before the committee.



a director of the Black Cap Foundation

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