



REDACTED Witness Statement

Appendix 2

**Statement in support of The Paris House received from Cllr
Birgit Miller**

Culture Lead, Brighton and Hove City Council

Goldsmid Labour and Co-op Ward Councillor

Member, Adult Social Care & Public Health

Member, Audit & Standards

Member, Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economy

Member, Transport & Sustainability

I believe that the continued existence of The Paris House as a live music venue is essential for several reasons, but firstly, I would like to address the volume of the music played. Secondly, I would like to address the importance of this venue to the city's musical ecosystem. And thirdly, I intend to address the importance of venues like this to our city's informal ecosystem of social support and care networks.

I visited the pub and its immediate vicinity during one of their Monday afternoon live jazz quartet sessions. I cycled there and found that I could only hear the music which was being played when I was on the pavement immediately outside the doors. Both when I locked and unlocked my bike at the nearest cycle rack on the street opposite (approximately 20/30m from the entrance), I was unable to hear anything at all from the pub. There was a substantial amount of traffic noise, but live music was not audible to me. Directly south of the venue, up to a distance of about 20m, it was very faintly audible if one knew what one was listening for and carefully listened for that sound. However, even moderate traffic noise obliterated it completely. The venue is very careful to keep windows and doors closed while music is being played, only opening them to let in air when the musicians are on a break and the only noise generated in the pub is speech.

The Paris House is a live music venue which offers a wide range of regular live music events. Although the Monday afternoon jazz session is the most complained about event, it was still quiet enough in the pub itself, while music was being played, for me to have conversations with the attendees, all of whom turned out to be regular visitors to the pub. One of the core reasons mentioned for why this afternoon jazz session is so important to them, is that attendance is free, and that it is in the afternoon. Older residents of our city, and older jazz lovers from elsewhere in Sussex, don't feel safe attending gigs after dark and travelling alone at night. Many of our city's older residents are on low and fixed incomes. Being able to attend these sessions with no expectation of expense (people are able to attend and drink tap water for free if they can't afford a drink), is important. Not everyone can afford the cost of live music in concert venues; keeping jazz and other types of music in the community to allow open access, whilst still paying musicians properly, is vital both for our residents' wellbeing but also for our identity as a city. This gives audiences access to both a community of other music lovers and to the important experience of hearing live music.

However, the Paris House is also essential for young and aspiring musicians' development. Several of the regular members of the Monday Boys are nationally and internationally recognised jazz musicians who use these sessions to mentor younger, less experienced players. They provide the invaluable experience for a young musician of working with performers of the highest calibre in a safe environment, allowing them to gain that knowledge and experience which helps musicians to launch their careers. The musician Jarrod Elk's career now includes regular professional appearances at the internationally recognised and pre-eminent UK jazz venue, Ronnie Scott's, but it began in the Paris House, being nurtured and mentored by the Monday Boys. Venues such as this, which allow both free access to the arts for audiences, but which also



support the development of artists are both rare and very precious. As a city we must nurture them, not restrict them.

However, The Paris House is far more than a pub. Its various regular music sessions and the audience of regulars which this generates has created a sense of community in this pub which is extraordinary. Several older regulars spoke about how this was the only space they knew where they could turn up alone and always have someone to sit and chat with. Numerous people told me about how welcoming and accepting the space is. Interestingly, I noticed that the film which was made about the Paris House reflects our city as it was in 2019 and was noticeably less ethnically diverse than the audience which I met in April 2024, reflecting the changes in our city's demographics. However, one readily noticeable aspect was the same – the interaction between age groups as equals. This extended from the wide age range of the musicians to the equally broad age range of the audience. But unlike at other events and venues, where different age groups will stick with each other, their shared love of music seems to bridge this common divide. Tables and conversations were very mixed in ages and age gaps of 30 or more years seemed completely unimportant. In addition, while The Paris House prides itself on being a safe space for members of the LGBTQ+ community, it is nonetheless a space which welcomes anyone, helping social cohesion in our city.

This community also provides an informal source of social support and care. As well as helping to tackle issues of loneliness (more than one person told me that this was the highlight of their week and that without it, they'd be completely lost and struggling with their mental health), the Paris House community looks after each other. Because of their closeness, unexplained absences are rapidly noted, and the absentees contacted, and visited or supported/cared if necessary (including assistance with hospital visits and fundraising for someone unable to work).

The Paris House is far more than a pub with live music. It is both essential to the city's musical ecosystem and our informal social networks. If sessions such as the Monday afternoon jazz sessions are lost and The Paris House community with it, our city will be the poorer, and many of our residents will have lost something very precious in their lives.

Cllr Birgit Miller

15th April 2024