

## **Supporting Statement: Empire House, Slaithwaite**

### **Side orangery extension to Old Town Hall, Lewisham Road, Slaithwaite, HD7 5AL**

#### **Contents**

1. Context
2. Before and after photos
3. Assessing the need
4. Quotes of support

#### **Context**

This statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application for amendments to the original permission 2020/90630 for the erection of detached communal room which was approved in October 2020.

Empire House, occupying Slaithwaite's Old Town Hall, opened in July 2021 as a luxury serviced office workspace and business members' club. With 11 offices, a wine and coffee bar, advanced WiFi, break-out spaces and meeting rooms – including a nine-person boardroom – it has become a thriving hub of collaboration, connection, and community.

Memberships are used by home workers who have become isolated and lonely from working from home; managing directors of multi-million-pound businesses, and start-ups who want to achieve fast growth.

This ever-growing network of members and tenants benefit from the support of Empire House's team, as well as from each other. Members have often said that being part of EH has changed their lives for the better and has touched many areas of their lives – from business introductions that have led to £50,000 contracts, to new, blossoming friendships and providing a venue for the celebration of personal achievements.

In the last 15 months, we have hosted 60+ networking events, ranging from directors' dinners to small, local makers' events, team away days, coworking events, learning workshops and more.

Users of our meeting rooms include Kirklees Council, Thornton & Ross, Venari Group, Ramsdens, and Simply Biz. We are proud to support both large and small businesses, and we encourage cross-company learning and introductions, where small start-ups can gain advice from some of the region's most successful business leaders.

Multi-million-pound deals have been brokered in our boardroom, fostering the growth of our region, whilst some members' employees are based all over the UK and use EH as a hub to meet regularly. This champions Huddersfield – more precisely, Slaithwaite – as a place that's good for business.

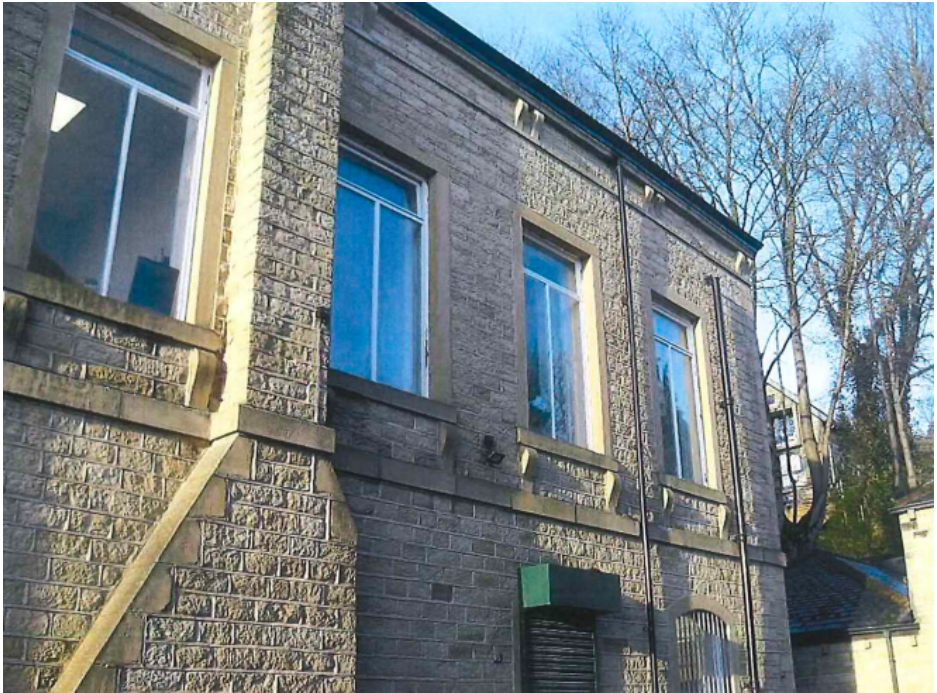
We have up to 50 people at Empire House on any one day, and most of these people go into the village for a walk and to purchase lunch – encouraging spending of up to £65,000 throughout the year.

We've created 2.5 full-time roles and use local freelancers for projects. This will grow as we grow.

We have made vast improvements to the 130-year-old building. It had previously been unloved, with bars on the windows and lacking due care and attention. See before and after photos below.

**Before photos, February 2020**









After photos, September 2022













The orangery is here and cannot be seen from Lewisham Road

## **Assessing the need**

Catering is an important part of what we do and therefore we require a kitchen to provide lunches for members, and to provide food at events. We therefore built a small kitchen on the side of our orangery to accommodate this.

We increased the footprint of the orangery to house our kitchen and the orangery which is now a quiet zone for members to concentrate and is a vital part of why people join EH. Many MDs who employ staff find that the quiet zone is a great place for deep work, strategizing and business planning, away from the demands of their 'normal' office.

We also added link glazing to provide shelter from the weather, from our lounge space into the orangery, ensuring that people – and freshly prepared food – don't get wet.

## **Design of roof and walls**

When building the orangery, we counter-acted the extra m<sup>2</sup> in width by reducing the roof height. Opting for a flat roof, it is now 700mm lower than initially proposed.

The flat roof reduces its impact on surrounding offices and ensures that the views of rolling hills and light are not blocked. The flat roof also provides an opportunity to access the gable end of the adjoining building for maintenance purposes, as well as a living roof in the future.

After research of other substantial properties, we felt that new detailing, including the stone plinth and bespoke joinery, gives a Victorian feel that is in keeping with the era of the building, which was built in 1892, providing design cohesion.

## **Landscaping**

We have retained the existing landscape planting and added to it, which provides full and effective screening from Lewisham Road and adjacent properties.

## **Quotes of support**

Chris Duffill, Head of Business, Economy & Growth at Kirklees Council said: "Good to meet you yesterday and it was really impressive to see what you have achieved at Empire House."

Patrick Boosey, Wellness Service Lead at Kirklees Council said: "We have found Empire House to be an excellent resource in the community for us to meet and plan business activities. We work in a number of different areas and find Empire House suits us both geographically and in regards to amenities. We usually use this venue to hold meetings and planning sessions and have also used it for recruitment/interviewing purposes. This has been really beneficial for our team and we have been able to work efficiently with the space on offer."

Paul Thompson, managing director of Media Performance, tenant, said: "Empire House is a hugely impressive venue, and one that suppliers and clients alike are pleasantly surprised by. The main building is hugely impressive, professionally run. Slawit, the place to be. Great work Amy Byram and team."

George Carter, tenant, said: "What you have created at Empire House is incredible. We all love it there. You have every right to be very proud."

Peter Cruikshanks, business coach, said: "I have always enjoyed my time at Empire House. Always very helpful; from you and your team."

Rebecca Woodhead, member, said: "An amazing professional place to work. Amy, Ash and the team are so welcoming to its members. I always have a productive day of work and it's great to meet other freelancers and small business owners."

Teb Moema, member, said: "I have been a member at Empire House for just over a year now and it has been a huge driver of success for my floral design business. Really important too it has allowed me to meet new people and make some great friends after having moved to Huddersfield from the south. The customer service is so much more than that. Everyone who works there feels like a friend and they are so calm, supportive, and professional. When running my wreath events and workshops, no ask is too big for them. I can't recommend it enough."

Olivia Martin, member, said: "Empire House has been an absolute god send for my business. It's not only a fantastic space to work, but it's been amazing for networking and the team have done their best to help me elevate my business too. The support I have received from Amy and the team has been absolutely out of this world and I am so pleased to be a member here."