

Email written to local residents that raised objections:

Dear All,

I wanted to write to introduce myself as the new owner of The Porter – the freehold purchase was completed early February along with the purchase of 13 and 14 George Street (Moles) and 12 Miles Buildings (juice recruitment). I also own and run The Halcyon hotel in South Parade which includes Circo bar and lounge.

Since purchasing the buildings I have wanted to engage with the local residents so have met and liaised closely with the Sally Rothwell (Circus Residents Association) and Ian Perkins (Abbey Green Residents Association) to update them on my proposed plans including planning applications and details of style of proposed offering. I feel they have welcomed the change in ownership and the proposed change of direction of the offering.

I am well aware of the issues that both The Porter and Moles have created in the past so I completely understand that there is great opposition to anything that may increase the nuisance of these establishments. I too have walked down Miles' buildings on a Saturday night and I agree it is feral with teenagers running wild. You will be pleased to know that I will be shutting down The Porter in May to undertake a detailed programme of refurbishment over all floors of the building to upgrade this beautiful run down city centre building. (Moles will still have its current tenants in place but as the freeholder of the building I will take action to ensure they do not allow antisocial behaviour surrounding their club). Although, I am writing regarding your opposition to my recent application I genuinely welcome the opportunity to write to you all to tell you of the plans for the buildings. Firstly, to inform you of my intentions and of course I hope that you will become guests when we reopen!

The refurbishment will see the pub closed for a few months from approx. 19th May and reopened in late summer with a completely different offering from its present format. The ground floor will house a high quality 62 cover all day kitchen restaurant, with private lounges, conference space and private dining rooms on the upper floors. I will be investing a further £500,000 on the refurbishment so as you would expect the operation will attract a completely different clientele. I have attached a series of images that will explain the design influences of the refurbishment.

The tables and chairs application specifies high quality furniture to be used in line with the new offering – bespoke handmade hard wood benches, Lloyd Loom wicker dining armchairs and Carrara marble topped tables. There is the inclusion of smart barriers which will assist in keeping the seating within the designated area – this will be strictly enforced by the new management. As you noted in my application there has been an increased number of tables and chairs but this is within the currently licensed area. There is still substantial pavement area down Miles' Buildings to walk or use a double pushchair and this has been confirmed by the highways department in the planning application. As a father of a young baby myself and the fact that we will be encouraging mothers and babies/toddlers to visit the restaurant it is essential this access remains clear.

I appreciate that the Porter has developed a reputation with local residents for loud, unruly young drinkers spilling out on to the pavement and surrounding areas – with the changes that are set to be made in the offering this element will not be present and therefore the proposals will have a positive effect for local residents who we would hope will become patrons. We want to be part of the local community and wish to engage all during our period of change - We have also contributed to the local residents fund to fight the sea gull problems in the area. As we will be opening a high quality establishment we will help to keep the unruly patrons of Moles from making a nuisance in the area.

I appreciate that until you have seen the new Porter, then you may have reservations about my proposals – I can assure you that from a business point of view I do not want to get involved in the student end of the market. I took over a horrendous/seedy nightclub called Qube/Celcius on South parade and transformed it into an upmarket cocktail lounge that have catered events for the majority of corporates clients in Bath including Dyson, Mogers, Virgin Media, Clarks, Thrings, Mowbray Woodwards, Withy Kings, Novia, Buro Happold. – we recently won a Bath Life award for best cocktail bar/watering hole in Bath. We do not cater for a student crowd and The Porter will be the same. I believe we will be a substantial benefit to the area and its residents by replacing the current Porter pub with some where I hope you will want to visit.

From reading your concerns, I would like to address some these and make some suggestion that I hope will be agreeable.

1. **There will be an increase in noise and nuisance** – as I have suggested above there will be a considerable reduction in noise and I would say elimination of nuisance. The area will be used for diners from the ground floor restaurant – it is obviously important for The Porter business that Moles guests do not also cause any disturbances. The management would actively manage this area – (I appreciate you may have heard this before from previous management! But I can assure you it is my business that it will effect so I will ensure there is no disturbances).
2. **The area would extend into the thoroughfare on Miles' Building's** – the tables and chairs will be contained within the existing licensed area which has been confirmed by the Highways agency as acceptable. We would also introduce smart barriers (rather than tatty post and chains) to ensure there was no overspill. Strictly enforced.
3. **Cigarette butts on the pavement** – as a non-smoker (and someone who recently turned down £3,000 from a cigarette company to stock them in Circo) I dislike cigarette butts intensely. We would place cigarette bins/ashtrays and also sweep up every evening as part of the housekeeping duties – it is important for us to keep the place clean.
4. **The increase in the number of tables and chairs** – The increase in the amount of tables and chairs outside is obviously for me to increase the potential for diners to sit outside and therefore my profitability. The outside area is of great importance to my business model and as such allows me to make the improvements that we wish to make at the Porter. Without these tables and chairs I would not be able to do such an extensive programme of refurbishment. As I have outline above (apologies if I have gone on too much!) I believe that there will be a substantial benefit to the local residents so I would hope that they supported my application. However I do appreciate that until you have been able to see for yourselves the changes there will be a degree of caution. May I propose a reduction in the number of tables in this application from 21 to 16.

I have been in touch with Alan Bartlett and I hope that I would be able to meet with you all (if possible) to address your concerns so you would be able to withdraw your objections in light of the comments above and the reduction in number of tables and chairs that I will make to the application.

If there are any queries about our application you are more than welcome to contact me direct – Giles Thomas 07810 51 43 42. I look forward to hearing from you and meeting soon,

Yours sincerely
Giles