

A statement made by Julian Lyons of Legends/Hotel International, regarding the proposed demolition of historic buildings on the corner of London Road and Whitworth Street. This was originally posted by him in the Facebook group: Facts About Manchester Pride on 1st February 2012.

I read with interest the posts and comments about the potential demolition of Legends/The Outpost/The Hotel International. I thought it might be helpful to set out the facts as far as we (the tenants of the building) know them.

Our landlords went into administration in late 2010. We immediately contacted the administrators with a view to purchasing the building but were rebuffed as this property was penciled in to be sold on as part of a larger portfolio of properties. Eventually that portfolio was sold off but we did not form part of the package and the building was offered for auction through Savills late last year. Jorge and I were given an indication of the guide price and had practically signed deals to remortgage our house, use our savings and attend the auction. Five days before the auction we discovered the property had been 'sold prior'. In effect a company had come in and offered a price 40% higher than the auctioneer reasonably expected to get. Completion was just before Christmas and we were given notice (in accordance with our lease) that we should leave at the end of 2012.

The new owners plan to demolish the whole building (but not Monroes which does not form part of the plot) and rebuild it as a new hotel. It's not a Travelodge or Premier Inn; I understand it to be a German chain who currently have no representation in England. Everything seems to have been done properly and the only way we have been able to renew our leases recently was to allow a 12 month development break clause. Had we been able to bid for the building at auction would we have done so? Yes. Would we like to stay longer? – Yes. Had we had more security of tenure would we have invested more in the property? Yes. So yes, love it or loathe it, current plans suggest that Legends, The Outpost and The Hotel International will not exist from 1 January 2013.

I've read a number of comments, both positive and negative about our venues and do not intend to respond to each individually. However I will make a number of points which address some recurring themes.

Six years ago, before we took on the lease of the Hotel International, it was in a pretty sorry state and at risk of being closed down by the Fire Brigade. It is now clean, efficient, friendly and full of character. It's not and never was going to be the Radisson but for a City Centre B & B, I think we've come up with a none rip off outfit that does what it says on the tin. A colleague from another hotel in Manchester visited us recently as part of her University work and was blown away by the number of repeat bookings we seem to get, week in week out. For its many faults, cleanliness, value, friendliness and a Nettie cooked breakfast have been a good combination.

The Outpost, when we moved in in 2003 was open 7pm til 11 during the week, and later at weekends. It is now a friendly pub on the edge of the village. It has been compared to Cheers

where everybody knows your name. I can live with that description and those of you with longer memories may recall it as Wells Fargo with the black walls and boarded up windows. It's a pub and that's what we try to do whilst trying to maintain keen prices.

Legends is perhaps the most interesting story. On moving in, our first priority was to bring the former Chains back as part of the operation. This we did by August 2003 and consistently, promoters want this space before all others. Throughout the club however, the subtle changes we made week on week were barely noticed by regulars (and if you remember the toilets next to Dot's Bar you'll know what I am talking about!!)

Suddenly, there was a sea change in 'gay' life (in so far as it affects scene queens). One was the change in Licensing laws which lead to the 'why bother going to a club when I can stay in venue xyz til 4am for free?' The second and perhaps bigger change was the explosion of social media shag sites. We have to be honest, most gay men coming to Legends were not here to admire the architecture or debate the historical significance of the building. It was an opportunity to go out, meet mates in both senses of the word and hopefully get laid. Gaydar, Eurowoof, Recon allow that from the comfort of your laptop (but I have to tell you boys, many are incredible timewasters!!!) These reasons led us to moving Legends to more of a promoter led venue. Our only criteria was it must be for those who are not currently accommodated in mainstream venues. Nights such as Bollox, Homoelectric, Twisted Wheel, Alert all cater for different people at different times; many of these are well established and successful, indeed Bollox was named as club night of the year 2011 with Homoelectric as alt club night of the year. Not bad for a place that lost its way 3 years ago!

As I am obviously in a verbose mode, I must address a couple of points made by some posters: We have never allowed smoking in Legends since the ban came into force and we take our H & S responsibilities incredibly seriously, viz new flooring in two of the rooms in the last month. In addition we have always and will, until our dying day have the best, friendliest, most attitude free venues around. I am incredibly proud that we have staff (most of whom are also friends) who stick with us? We pay the industry standard so it's not for the money. I hope it's because they like us and like working there. Which leads me on to

You can bitch and moan about myself and Jorge all you want, after all we took the leases with all their pitfalls but please remember for the wonderful 60 or so people who work for us, 2013 is not looking so great. We're beetling away in the background to try to relocate or position people elsewhere and continue to do so, but there is an element of human tragedy buried in this corporate world.