

Camden New Journal

'Re-open the Black Cap' call as Breakfast Club diner deal falls through



The Black Cap in Camden High Street was one of the UK's best known LGBT bars

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By WILLIAM McLENNAN

CONTROVERSIAL plans to replace a historic gay bar with a trendy café have fallen through, leaving former customers urging owners to reopen the venue.

Protesters took to the streets of Camden Town in April after the Black Cap was unceremoniously closed by pub company Faucet Inn, which said at the time that sale of the building would "complete imminently".

A newly-formed investment company, Camden Securities LLP, surfaced as a potential buyer and restaurant chain the Breakfast Club agreed to take a lease on the ground floor.

But the deal with Jersey-registered owner KickingHorse Limited, which bought the lease for £11.4million in 2010, will no longer be going ahead, it can be revealed.

Faucet Inn had been running the venue on behalf of the owner, and chief executive Steve Cox confirmed yesterday (Wednesday) that the sale was not going ahead.

He refused to say if Faucet Inn would reopen the venue or if a new buyer was being sought, adding: "The future of the Black Cap is still undecided. We are looking at a number of different options at the moment."

Plans to open a restaurant on the site faced a fierce backlash after being revealed in the New Journal in June. Breakfast Club boss Jonathan Arana-Morton said he felt "caught in the crossfire" of the vociferous campaign to reopen the pub. He said the company had supported LGBT charities in Soho and Brighton, adding: "We're not used to dealing with controversy. We think we're good people."

The news sparked an intervention by Town Hall planning chief Phil Jones, who wrote to the Breakfast Club in July and warned that a change of use from bar to café would be a "breach of planning control" and would be met with "robust enforcement action" from the council.

More than 200 people closed Camden High Street during a protest over the bar's closure in April, while a petition, set up by Camden councillor Danny Beales, calling for the venue to reopen has collected 7,800 signatures.

The head of Camden LGBT Forum, Nigel Harris, who has been holding a "vigil" outside the Black Cap alongside fellow campaigners every Saturday, has called on KickingHorse Ltd to reopen the bar as a LGBT venue.

Asking for a meeting with the firm, he has said: "All of these displaced Black Cap customers will return, and along with the proven high level of interest throughout London, the community will guarantee a standing room-only reopening night before settling back to the previous high level of activity before closure.

"This gives you certainty of a dependable tenancy income for years ahead, and gives any tenant publican a first-rate business opportunity."



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Comments

Submitted by Anonymous on Fri, 2015-08-28 08:11.

Excellent article, and highlighting an emphasis

Black Cap campaigners would welcome hearing from any pub operator interested in re-opening The Black Cap in its current form. However it should be noted that whilst Faucet Inn may issue opinions about its future intention, which in any case can only be to realistically re-open the pub as it is, it does not presently seem to us have a stake in the pub.

It is only Kicking Horse as freeholder that can appoint a new operator, which is why campaigners wish to speak to them.