

Family restaurant fear closure because of smelly bins placed outside

A family-run Edinburgh restaurant fear they could face closure as a result of the council's installation of a "smelly" bin hub just a few feet away from its outside tables.

Waste and recycling bins appeared outside Tapas3 in Newington this month despite concerns about the potentially "devastating" impact on the business and a "flawed" location approval process being raised last year.

It is feared they will attract pests and drive customers away over the summer when the popular Spanish eatery doubles its capacity with outdoor tables and chairs, allowing it to make up for a dip in takings during colder months.

After taking the council to task but receiving no assurances the bins would be moved elsewhere, director David Hutchison said he is now considering taking legal action as he believes "due process" was not followed by officials.

"Their criteria [for bin hubs] is they have to have a minimum of two metres pavement width for safe access," he told the LDRS. "There's not two metres there because they never took into account the tables and chairs permit.

"This is a decision which has been imposed on us with zero

benefit for us, with a massive impact which could threaten the business.”

Prior to installation of the glass, mixed recycling and general waste bins – soon to be joined by a food waste bin as well – and metal railings which hold them in place the council issued a letter saying it was “proposing to locate the bin hub further north in the street,” unless objections came from residents.

Mr Hutchison said he understood objections have already been made, but that discussions about an alternative location was a “distraction”.

He added: “This should never have gone ahead – how can they install something, impose it with such a bad impact when there’s no justification from their own procedures for doing it?”

“In their own impact assessment they say some residents may have impact from odour, noise and vermin – so it’s recognised in their impact assessment yet they still feel it’s okay to put it outside a business. All this has been raised since last July and nobody’s listening.”

His wife Saliha Hauochi, who runs the restaurant and next door flamenco dance studio, said: “If those bins stay there, it’s going to affect us. It’s not worth it – we’ll have to go. This business is not going to be viable, the landlord is not going to find anybody to take this business with bins here.

“We just started up after Covid, in order not to lose the studio I decided to take over the place and I got the family to help me to run it.”

Bar manager Elliot McLeod said: “The Fringe really for us is the month which decides if we make money or we don’t, it’s that important. We don’t make money during the winter. Last year we were packed out the front, we had people out there all

day every day.

“These bins right now we’ve got glass waste, recycling and general waste.

“Those three things aren’t necessarily going to attract certain things like pests, wasps, bees and things like that so I think the food waste is going to add a completely different dynamic when that gets put in.”

Local resident Ola Olsinova also blasted the decision to site a bin hub outside the only business on Howden Street, saying: “I personally love using this place as a customer, I love sitting outside in summer, I think it’s a beautiful place to sit and also it’s really buzzing with life. It’s the one lovely exciting thing we have on the street.

“I don’t want to sit by the bins and I strongly believe that overall it’s really bad for this local business. Even as a person who lives here and has rubbish I would feel very uncomfortable putting my smelly food waste next to people who are eating.

“It could be absolutely anywhere else but here. This is a place we enjoy.”

In response to a formal complaint from Mr Hutchison, project manager Michael Richardson said when selecting bin hub locations officials “review data from several sources and apply the approved criteria to ensure each location is suitable”.

He said: “This criteria enables each bin hub to provide the full range of waste and recycling services, sufficient capacity (linked to increased collection frequency) and reduces the need for residents to walk further than 50 metres or cross a road to dispose of their waste and recycling.”

Cllr Scott Arthur, Transport and Environment Convener, said:

“Our city-wide communal bin review project is grouping together recycling and waste bins to improve recycling provision and waste collection reliability for around 130,000 of our residents. The first phase of the project has been a great success and has led to a massive drop (85%) in the number of overflowing mixed recycling bin reports to the Council.

“When selecting bin hub locations, colleagues apply the approved criteria to ensure each location is suitable. This location meets the criteria by providing full usage of waste and recycling services, sufficient capacity and it reduces the need for residents to walk further than 50 metres or cross a road to dispose of their waste or recycling.

“We have a framework, approved by committee last May, which we use this to investigate all requests for alternative locations and where we can accommodate these we will. This allows us to be as flexible as possible and fair to all residents. Nonetheless, I respect Tapas3’s right to challenge the installation via the complaint process and I will ensure the case is dealt with in a fair manner.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

