



Għaqda Residenti Sliema

Sliema Residents Association

SRA PO Box 66 Sliema

www.sra.org.mt

info@sra.org.mt

Subject : PRESS RELEASE - Presented to the Prime Minister the proposals to safeguard Villa Bonici and the surrounding area from further development and inclusion of an 'old peoples' home'.

The Sliema Residents Association (SRA) Committee presented a report to the Prime Minister containing its concerns to safeguard Villa Bonici and the surrounding area together with a proposal for an 'old peoples' home' in Sliema. This was done through the Hon. Dr. Mario de Marco, Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Tourism, Culture and the Environment within the Office of the Prime Minister at a meeting held at Auberge d'Italie, last week.

The motivation behind the SRA proposals follow the assertions made by both MEPA in its North Harbours Local Plan (NHLP) 2006 document that Sliema is well overdeveloped with a serious lack of open spaces and claims by ADT that, Sliema's roads infrastructure is already overloaded and further development will precipitate the already precarious traffic problems, including the air pollution levels which already exceed EU safeguard levels. Furthermore, neither infrastructure nor the social amenities have been upgraded to cope with the extra demands of its increased population density. Such overdevelopment is having serious implications on both physical and mental health of Sliema residents and visitors (see Ensuring quality of life in Europe's cities and towns (EEA report/ No 5/2009))

While MEPA still continues to grant development permits, the Association questioned MEPA's town planning policies, whereby no mitigating measures are being put in place to address the above mentioned issues. The SRA claims that this defies sensible sustainable town planning logic. MEPA's policies for Sliema are generally lop-sided to clearly prioritise the interests of developers to the detriment of the town's residents' rights to live in a clean and healthy environment, as stipulated by the European Union directives.

In view of this predicament the SRA is questioning MEPA's decision for removing the Villa Bonici site from 'Urban Conservation Area' status and instead endowed it with 'area with unlimited height' status. To the contrary, SRA is proposing

detailed changes to the building heights within this area as one measure to counteract the overdevelopment problem within Sliema.

The SRA conceptual proposals are aimed to preserve the identity of the Villa, its farmhouse and terraced gardens, (see brief report entitled "*A lung in danger of collapse*" on the SRA website www.sra.org.mt) thereby creating an open space for the fulfilment and enjoyment of the public and to re-habilitate an existing building to provide the much promised and long overdue public residential home for the Sliema elderly, together with off-street parking.

In view of a number of pending major development proposals for this area, the SRA asks MEPA for urgent action to address what it considers as evident breach of approved policies documented in the NHLP and Structure Plan, which tend to favour developers' interests, over and at the expense of local residents' rights and legitimate interests.

Regrettably however, the SRA notes that its proposals for Villa Bonici were treated dismissively by the Hon. Dr de Marco and the MEPA Chairman Mr Walker, who, on the other hand, expressed a keen apprehension regarding the financial outlays and legal implications of the official interventions proposed by the SRA report, due to which the meeting ended inconclusively.

Reacting to the SRA's claims regarding unsustainable development and the loss of the Sliema architectural character heritage, Dr de Marco did however express his support for initiatives for the preservation of characteristic 'old' Sliema streets from the threat of high rise buildings.

The SRA believes that the 'powers that be' of this country seem to abdicate their obligations regarding fundamental civic rights, such as those relating to health issues and the well being of residents, under the pretext of legal constraints and financial limitations.

The Association is alarmed by such short sightedness and this may ultimately also prejudice economic viability with the loss of the locality's attractiveness to local and foreign visitors and provoke an upward spiral of the social and healthcare burdens of the local population.

Nevertheless, the SRA is determined to continue campaigning to save Villa Bonici and its grounds and to argue for the creation of an open space for the fulfilment and enjoyment of the Public, and to re-habilitate an existing building and provide the promised and much needed public home for the Sliema elderly.

Joe Morana

f/The Sliema Residents Association Committee

Stqarrija għall-istampa

L-Għaqda Residenti Sliema (Sliema Residents Association – SRA) ipprezentat ‘rapport’ lill-Prim Ministru li jesprimi t-thassib u l- proposti dettaljati tagħha għal harsien ta’ ‘Villa Bonici’ w l-art tal-madwar bi proposta ukoll li ssir Dar għal Anzjani residenti f’tas-Sliema. Dawn il- proposti tressqu fl-isfond ta’ l-izvilupp insostenibbli li sar, qed isehh u/jew hemm progettat għal tas-Sliema. Din il- prezentazzjoni saħhet permezz ta’ l-Onorevoli Dr M. deMarco -Segretarju Parlamentari għat-Turizmu, Kultura u Ambjent fl-Ufficcju tal-Prim Ministru, waqt laqgħa li saret għal dan il -ghan fil-berga ta’ L-Italia.

Fid-dokument li gie pprezentat, L-Għaqda Residenti Sliema esprimi il-fehma u t-thassib tagħha li l-izvilupp insostenibbli li sar u qed isehh f’din il- lokalita’ kif awtorizzat mill-MEPA, jmur kontra l-istess *policies* imfassla u mahruga minn din l-istess Awtorita’ u kontra l-logika li wiehed jistenna ta’ zvilupp sensibbli w sostenibbli għal din il- lokalita’.

L-Għaqda Residenti Sliema ressqet t-thassib u l-proposti tagħha abbazi ta’ dak li hemm miktub skond fl-istess Pjan Lokali għall-Portijiet tal-Majjistral 2006.(NHLP) tal- MEPA kif ukoll f’rapporti ta’ l-Awtorita’ tat-Trasport, dwar nuqqas serju w il-htiega ta’ zoni/spazji miftuha, kif ukoll għall-fatt magħruf li l-infrastruttura tat-toroq w facilitajiet soċjali ohra tagħha waqghu lura w ma gewx zviluppanti b’mod li jlahhqu mal-htigijiet li gab mieghu tali zvilupp, inkluz dawk ta’ progetti kbar li sehew matul dawn l-ahhar għexieren ta’ snin. Dan l-izvilupp insostenibbli, qed igib mieghu zieda fil –volum tat-traffiku b’konsegwenzai ta’ tnggis ta’ l-arja li diga jaqbes il-limiti ta’ salvagwardja stabbiliti bid-direttivi ta’l- Unjoni Ewropea.

Dan kollu seh u qed isehh għas-skapitu w għad-detriment tas-sahha w il-kwalita’ tal-hajja tar-residenti li ga jghixu f’tas-Sliema.

L-Għaqda Tar- Residenti saħqet li L-izvilupp li seh mill-1988 cahhad lil tas-Sliema mill-wirt arkitettoniku w dehra sinjorili li din il-lokalita’ tant kienet magħrufa għalihom. Dan l-izvilupp halla li dawk id-djar sbieh li fadal, mohbija w midfuna wara w qalb il- bini modern għoli li jdawwar ukoll ix-xtut ta’ din il-lokalita’.

Din is-sitwazzjoni ta’ lapazzar tagħti lok lill-Għaqda Residenti Sliema tifhem li l-agir ta’ l-Awtorita’ Maltija għall-Ambjent u Ppjanar joqrob aktar lejn l-interessi ta’ l-izviluppaturi, milli għal harsien tad-drittijiet ta’ sahha u kwalita’ tal- hajja tar-residenti.

Fl-isfond ta’ din is- sitwazzjoni prekarja, L-Għaqda Residenti Sliema tesprimi dubbji serji dwar kif il- MEPA iddecidiet li tbiddel l-*status* ta’ Villa Bonici bil-gonna kbar tagħha min dak ta’ **“Zona ta’ Konservazzjoni Urbana’ għal status ta’ Zona ta’ Zvilupp mingħajr limit ta’ Bini Għoli”** . Bil- kuntrarju l-Għaqda tar-Residenti qed tibdil beix

jitnaqqas l-gholi ta' bini gdid fl-inhawi biex ma tkompliex tipprecipita il –probelma ta' zvilupp insosstenibbli.

L-ghanijiet wara dawn il-proposti huma li filwaqt li essenzjalment tinzamm l-karatteristika ta' Villa Bonici, ir-razzett u l-gonna mtargin taghha, jigi mahluq spazju rikrejattiv pubbliku u jigi rijabilitat bini ezistenti f'l-inhawi, biex jipprovdi residenza (pubblika) ghall- Anzjani Sliemizi u jipprovdi spazju ghall-parkegg mehtieg.

L-Ghaqda Residenti Sliema izda tinnota li l-proposti mressqa minnha ma sabux l-appogg ta' L-Onor Dr deMarco u tac- Chairman tal-MEPA is- Sur Walker li minnufih esprimew id-diffikultajiet u l-implikazzjonijiet legali w finanzzjari li jahsbu li se jqumu kemm il-darba l- Gvern u l-MEPA iwettqu l –proposti mressqa mill-Ghaqda Residenti Sliema.

Izda b'reazzjoni ghall- insistenza ta'L-Ghaqda tar- Residneti dwar it- telf ta' wirt arkitettoniku minhabba zvilupp bla razan , L-Onor deMarco esprima l-appogg tieghu ghal inizzjattivi li jharsu toroq 'antiki' mit-theddid ta;' zvilupp b'bini modern u gholi .

Fic-cirkostanzi din l-Ghaqda tar-Residenti tifhem, li l-Awtoritajiet gholja tal-pajjiz jidhru li qed jabdikaw mir- repsonsabilitajiet taghhom dwar id-drittijiet civilili tar-residenti. Dan fejn jirirgwardja id- dritt tar-residenti li jghixu f'ambjent 'san' u minghajr tniggis ta' l-arja, wara pretesti ta` proceduri legali w/jew pizijiet finanzjarji.

L-Ghaqda Residenti Sliema hi mhassba li l-Awtoritajiet mhux qed iharsu lejn dawn il-problemi fit- tul u fejn dan in-nuqqas jista` jippregudika l- vijabbilta' ekonomika ta' din il- lokalita'. Dan peress li tas-Sliema se ttitlef mill-attrazzjoni taghha sew ghal Maltin kif ukoll ghall- barranin, kif ukoll hu mistenni zieda fl-ispiza biex jigi kkurat mard respiratorju u x'ort ohra kawzat mit- tniggis ta' l-arja f'din il-lokalita`.

Minkejja dawn id –diffikultajiet, l-Ghaqda Residenti Sliema hi determinata li tkompli bil-kampanja taghha biex tigi rijabilitata Villa Bonici w l-gonna taghha ghal skopijiet pubblici, kif ukoll biex jigi riabilitat bini fl-inahwi bl-iskop li titwaqqaf Dar ta' L-Anzjani tant mehtiega ghar- residenti anzjani ta' tas-Sliema.

Joe Morana

Ghall -Kumitat Ghaqda Residenti Sliema