



# Għaqda Residenti Sliema

**Sliema Residents Association**

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**Subject : SRA insists on rights of all Sliema residents to a healthy and sustainable environment**

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The Sliema Residents Association (SRA) thanks Mr Gera de Petri for his public reaction to its proposals regarding Villa Bonici and its gardens (TOM 1/3/2010)

The SRA fully supports Mr Gera De Petri's comments that "owners do have rights and that these are also protected by the Constitution and the European Court". However SRA asserts that residents have fundamental rights too and MEPA's role as a public environment protection and planning authority is to ensure that owners' rights are exercised in the "public interest". It stands to reason therefore, that owners' rights should not override the fundamental rights of residents to a healthy and sustainable environment. .

SRA is confident that both Dr de Marco and Mr Gera de Petri appreciate that the differences in MEPA's strategic height limitations (as codified in the Local Plans) are not to be regarded as discriminatory, but are necessary for a healthy and sustainable town environment. Similar principles apply to the restrictions on scheduled property, whose owners face a financial cost or loss due to MEPA's regulations as the law contemplates different planning policies, distinguishing even between one site and the next, "**in the public interest**".

Referring to the issues of expropriation and right of compensation to be paid to property owners against its market value as mentioned by Mr Gera De Petri, the SRA again has no reservations with this fundamental right. However, in view that between 2000 and 2006 the Villa Bonici site was changed from a UCA status (i.e. limited building and highly regulated) to the present state of 'no specified building height' without the necessary public consultation, SRA questions as to which market price will be paid from the tax payers' pocket. SRA has publicly questioned MEPA why and how this change in site status came to be, but to date no reply has been forthcoming.

SRA reiterates that its concerns and proposals regarding the Villa Bonici area were submitted within the holistic context of continued unsustainable overdevelopment of Sliema that adversely affects residents' health and quality of life and therefore in the "public interest". SRA's assertions are based on MEPA's own North Harbours Local Plan 2006, the

Structure Plan and Air Quality monitoring data, and the Transport Authority's professional traffic flow/management reports. Therefore, SRA has not acted out of "unbridled enthusiasm" and "sheer cheek" as suggested by Mr Gera De Petri

If planning permits for this area were to be approved, incumbent and prospective residents will have to bear the brunt of urban density problems such as increased traffic problems and air pollution which are set to deteriorate further once the new commercial centre in Tigne opens up in a few weeks time.

While acknowledging that there may be significant legal and financial challenges, as described in Dr. de Marco's press communication, SRA strongly feels that such challenges should not override the "public interest" of Sliema residents' right for environmental and planning control to be properly exercised.

The Sliema Residents Association Committee