

Press Release

One of the aspirations of MEPA's North Harbour Local Plan (NHLP) was to regulate development in order to protect residential areas from inappropriate establishments. This Local Plan set out Residential Areas (RAs) and through specific policies, defined which type of outlets may be permitted within these areas.

The Use Classes Order classifies bars, restaurants and cafeterias as Class 6 premises. This Class is specifically excluded from residential areas in the NHLP policy NHH01: *"Land-uses falling outside those mentioned above (i.e. Class 6) will not be considered favourably within the designated RAs, unless there are overriding reasons to locate such uses within these areas."* The NHLP also defines those residential areas of Sliema that fall under policy NHH01. The exception to this policy is Paceville as a *"tourism and entertainment"* area. Despite numerous objections, MEPA's DCC Board 'B' allowed itself to be persuaded to extend Paceville policies to Sliema and in November 2007 gave permission for a Class 6 premises to operate in Qui-si-Sana. What was previously a souvenir shop is now a bar.

The thin edge of the wedge had been applied to crack open the security given to Sliema residents by the NHLP. Under this decision, it could now be claimed that any shop or commercial premises in Sliema may convert to a bar or restaurant. The Qui-si-Sana and Tigne Residents Association had voiced its fears that this will allow places of entertainment to flourish. MEPA's PRO at the time had ridiculed our comments, declaring this scenario impossible.

However the crack is being steadily widened. In spite of the fact that the concept of precedent is not entrenched in any MEPA regulation, two other applications in the area being considered by MEPA for a change of use to Class 6 premises. Furthermore, one existing bar has apparently been given permission to play loud music up to the early hours of the morning, much to the distress of neighbours.

All over Sliema, blocks of flats combining commercial premises are replacing houses however around 3,000 apartments are still vacant. Sliema has developed far beyond capacity and the viability of all these shops is doubtful. The pressure from developers to change the use to more lucrative types will mount as time passes.

At a public meeting held just before the last election residents were promised that safeguarding the interests of residents was a priority in the MEPA reform. The impression given was that reform was imminent. In practice, this is still far from reality. The Paceville scenario is terrifying to any homeowner, - a quiet residential area transformed into an entertainment zone, with days and nights turned into a nightmare of noise, dirt, drunks and danger.

This is not a plea for special treatment. Residents, even those of Sliema, have a right to live in peace and quiet. Residents are not a nuisance, with their rights to be circumvented or ignored. The laws that protect residents and residential areas must be respected and upheld by the institutions created for that purpose, not twisted and re-interpreted in order to accommodate speculation.

Qui-si-Sana and Tigne Residents Association
Sliema Residents Association

Wiehed mill-aspirazzjonijiet tal-MEPA North Harbour Local Plan (NHLP) kien li jirregola l-iżvilupp sabiex jiġu protetti żoni residenzjali minn stabbilimenti mhux xierqa. Dan il-Pjan Lokali stabbilixxa Żoni Residenzjali (RAs) u permezz ta' politiki speċifiċi, gie definit liema tip ta' ħwienet jista' jkun permissibbli fi ħdan dawn l-oqsma.

Il-“Use Classes Order” jikklassifika bars, ristoranti u kafetteriji bħala Klassi 6 bini. Din il-klassi hu speċifikament eskluż mill-żoni residenzjali fil-politika NHH01 tal-NHLP: *“Land-uses falling outside those mentioned above (i.e. Class 6) will not be considered favourably within the designated RAs, unless there are overriding reasons to locate such uses within these areas.”* Il-NHLP jiddefinixxi wkoll dawk iż-żoni residenzjali ta' Tas-Sliema li jaqgħu taħt il-politika NHH01. L-eċċezzjoni għal din il-politika huwa Paceville bħala “żona ta turizmu u divertiment”.

Minkejja l-oġġezzjonijiet numerużi, il-MEPA DCC Bord "B" permetta innifsu li jiġi konvint li jestendi politiki imfasslin speċifikament għall-Paceville lil Tas-Sliema u f'Novembru 2007 ta permess għal Klassi 6 bini li jopera fi Qui-si-Sana. Dak li qabel kien ħanut tas-souvenirs issa sar bar.

It-tarf tal-feles giet applikata biex tiftaħ l-ewwel xaqq fis-sigurtà mogħtija lir-residenti tas-Sliema mill-NHLP. Taħt din id-deċiżjoni, issa jista' jintalab li kull ħanut jew bini kummerċjali f' Tas-Sliema jista' jikkonverti għal bar jew ristorante. L-Għaqda Residenti ta Qui-si-sana u Tigne kienet esprimiet il-biża' tagħha li dan ser jippermetti l-postijiet ta' divertiment jizdedu bla razan. Dak iz-zmien, il-PRO tal-MEPA irredikolat il-kummenti tagħna, u iddikjarat dan ix-xenarju impossibbli.

Madankollu, ix-xaqq qed dejjem jitwessa'. Minkejja l-fatt li l-kunċett ta' precedent ma jinsab f'ebda regolament tal-MEPA, żewġ applikazzjonijiet oħra fil-qasam qed jiġu kkunsidrati mill-MEPA għal bidla ta' użu għall-Klassi 6 bini. Barra minn hekk, bar eżistenti tkun tidher li issa giet mogħtija l-permess biex idoqq mużika tghajjat sas-sigħat bikrin ta' filgħodu, għas-skumditu' kbira tal-ġirien.

Madwar tas-Sliema kollu, blokki ta' flats li jikkombinaw bini kummerċjali qed jieħdu post id-djar. Madankollu madwar 3,000 appartamenti għadhom vojta. Sliema żviluppata lil hinn mill-kapaċità u l-vijabbiltà ta' dawn il-ħwienet huwa dubjuż. Il-persjoni mill-iżviluppaturi biex jibdlu l-użu biex izidu il-qligħ se jizded biz-żmien.

Waqt laqgħa pubblika li saret eżatt qabel l-aħħar elezzjoni, giet imwegħda li is-salvagwardjar tal-interessi tar-residenti kienet prijorità fir-riforma tal-MEPA. L-impressjoni mogħtija kienet li r-riforma kienet imminenti. Fil-prattika, dan għadu 'l bogħod mir-realtà. Ix-xenarju ta' Paceville huwa tal-wahx għal-sid ta' familja, - żona residenzjali kwieta trasformata f'żona ta' divertiment, il-jiem u il-jiem mibdula fi ħmar il-lejl ta' storbu, ħmieġ, sakranazzi u periklu. Din mhix talba għal trattament speċjali. Residenti, anke dawk ta' Sliema, għandhom id-dritt li jgħixu fil-paċi u kwiet. Residenti mhumiex inkonvenjent, biex id-drittijiet tagħhom jiġu evitati jew injorati. Il-ligijiet li jipproteġu r-residenti u ż-żoni residenzjali għandhom ikunu irrispettati u milqugħa mill-istituzzjonijiet maħluqa għal dan il-għan, mhux mibrumin u interpretati mill-gdid sabiex jakkomodaw l-ispekulazzjoni.

Għaqda Residenti Qui-si-Sana u Tigne
Għaqda Residenti Tas-Sliema