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Mounting worries over Jin Bukit Pantai project

The Star, Malaysia



Earmarked for development: Aerial photo of the site in Jalan Bukit Pantai, Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur. — IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star



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The 2.3ha land for the proposed project in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur. — Photos: IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

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THE arterial road of Jalan Bukit Pantai in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, sees rush-hour traffic on any given day.

The situation is worsened by even just a short bout of heavy rain, as cars ply this route to get to Bukit Pantai and greater Bangsar.

The road is also home to the main offices of Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) and Pengurusan Air Selangor Kuala Lumpur as well as Pantai Hospital Kuala Lumpur.

Jalan Bukit Pantai serves as the main entry and egress road for all these developments.

Residents say massive mixed development along arterial road not suitable for the area

Traffic issues are a daily occurrence for residents of Zehn Bukit Pantai condominium as well as neighbouring areas such as Taman Bukit Pantai, Taman Bangsar Pertama, Lucky Garden and Bukit Bandaraya.

As such, news that a colossal mixed development proposal on a 2.3ha strip of land looms on the horizon is causing concern among stakeholders, especially residents of Zehn Bukit Pantai condominium.

In a statement to *StarMetro*, Kuala Lumpur City Hall

(DBKL) said it received an application from the developer on Jan 26, 2022, for a mixed development project comprising 1,359 service apartments and 61 units of shops spread across 70-storey towers.

“The One-Stop Centre committee in a meeting in February 2022 decided that the developer’s application would be postponed until the Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2040 (KLLP2040) is gazetted.

“This takes into consideration the fact that Lot 481838 is gazet-

ted as public open space as well as infrastructure and utility according to Kuala Lumpur City Plan 2020 (KLCP2020).

“To date, no development order (DO) has been approved for this site,” said DBKL.

Lack of transparency

Zehn Bukit Pantai Residents Association (ZBPRA) chairman Lt-Kol (Rtd) Dr Amar Singh said they came to know about the project late last year.

He said the sheer height of the



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Jalan Bukit Pantai is chock-a-block with traffic as it is a main arterial road in Bangsar.



Shot of heavy traffic along Jalan Bukit Pantai, Kuala Lumpur taken by a resident of the area.



Dr Amar: Development on such a massive scale will worsen flood risks and give rise to landslides.



Viknesh: We don't want this last patch of greenery in Bangsar to be taken away.



Sarikha: Bangsar has river and water channels running through, necessitating in-depth studies.

proposed buildings opposite their condo was unfathomable. "We cannot imagine such a development on a narrow piece of land.

"This is the last bit of public open space we have. How will it affect nearby communities?"

"Traffic at peak hours is almost at a standstill and gets worse when it rains, with ambulances also held up.

"A development on such a massive scale will worsen flood risks and give rise to possible landslides in an area which is already prone to such events."

Dr Amar said ZBPRA had previously met Lembah Pantai MP Fahmi Fadzil on the matter – on Nov 4 last year and subsequently on Nov 8 along with a coalition of seven neighbouring residents associations (RAs), management committees and other community organisations within the Lembah Pantai parliamentary constituency.

Fahmi told *StarMetro* that after discussions with DBKL, he was informed that no development order approval had been given for the project.

"In fact, the status of the land is currently under review in the draft KLLP2040 document.

"I have instructed my team to organise a meeting with residents on this matter," added Fahmi.

Dr Amar said there had been a lot of talk about making Kuala Lumpur a sustainable city.

"But with open spaces and green lungs disappearing, are they walking the talk?"

"Mixed residential and commercial space might stimulate the economy, but we don't see how the plot size can sustain development like this," he said.

Saving a green lung

On July 17, 2023, a *StarMetro* report titled "Govt trying to cancel deals involving reserve land in KL" stated that 52 plots of government land in the capital – some reserved as green lungs and open spaces – had been alienated and leased to developers and businessmen between 2020 and 2022.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's aide Azman Abidin had said that they were trying to cancel some of these deals but the challenge was when land premiums had already been paid.

He said the Prime Minister had ordered an immediate freeze on the sale or lease of government land, including plots that were in the process of being alienated.

ZBPRA deputy chairman Mark La Brooy said Lot 481838 was the only public open space nearby and the proposed development would not contribute to the well-being of the community.

"The only remaining green areas in the vicinity are all privately owned or

institutional land.

"It would be easier to justify if public utilities or low-cost housing were involved, but that is not the case.

"Why isn't the government prioritising projects involving housing near transit-oriented development?"

"This proposal is nowhere near that," said Le Brooy.

He said ZBPRA also attended a recent briefing organised by DBKL to better understand the draft KLLP2040.

"Under the draft KLLP2040, DBKL has allowed the land to be converted to mixed development from public open space as well as infrastructure and utility.

"We want to be called for a public hearing.

"There should be policies in place before development proposals are considered.

"What is the point of public engagement when there is a lack of transparency with stakeholders by the authorities?" added La Brooy.

In a letter to *StarMetro*, the developer's lawyer said they had taken into consideration the concerns of the community.

"Our client believes that the concerns of the community and the queries mentioned will all be taken into due consideration by the local authority in making their decision towards our client's proposed development including but not limited to any amendment required," it added.

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Developer's lawyer



In the *StarMetro*'s report on July 17, 2023, the deals also include land set aside as open spaces or green lungs.

Lucky Garden Residents Association (LGRA) chairman Sarikha Kandasamy said any new development on Jalan Bukit Pantai would only aggravate the already burdened arterial road.

"As it is, the roundabout at Lucky Garden sees standstill traffic daily.

"The planned development site is also very close to the Lorong Bukit Pantai intersection, which makes this an unsuitable location.

"Bangsar also has river

and water channels running through it.

"There needs to be responsible development, and in-depth studies by geologists first," said Sarikha.

Taman Bangsar Pertama Residents Association chairman Viknesh Subramaniam expressed worry about vibrations from future earthworks for the project.

"We don't want this last patch of greenery in Bangsar to be taken away," he added.