

The Bermuda Environmental Sustainability Taskforce (BEST) is glad to hear that the restaurant building and amenities at Shelly Bay are to get some much-needed attention. The plans for food, beverage and community services are ambitious and point to a significant upgrade in the facilities. We support tasteful toilet facilities at most beaches and parks.

At the same time, we believe there are some areas that should remain as pristine as possible. This may be a more difficult pill for the public to swallow but, in an Island as densely developed and populated as Bermuda is, we have to hold a harder line to make sure we offer variety in beach and parkland experience to locals and visitors.

While we welcome and endorse making more amenities available to suit families with children at Shelly Bay, which is known for its safe and gentle underwater slope, we would posit that not every beach needs to be built upon. We cannot afford to have every beach mimic Horseshoe Bay where the beach gets so crowded sometimes that trash barrels are overwhelmed and tempers become edgy — that level of activity is not sustainable. And we must retain a few beaches where, like Warwick Long Bay for example, their pristine and natural beauty are worth shielding perhaps forever from commercial development.

Warwick Long Bay in particular is not as safe as most of our beaches. There is a sharp underwater drop-off close to the waterline that poses danger for children and unskilled or impaired swimmers. Also, the berm is steep, which limits tractor use for raking seaweed that accumulates. In addition to the natural value, these are good reasons to preserve WLB in a state as close to wilderness as possible. Toilets and a daily lunchwagon are all the facilities needed there.

We often hear the mantra from development promoters that “sustainable development doesn’t mean ‘no’ development”. We would remind that neither does it mean ‘saturation’ development. We are sympathetic to entrepreneurial spirit but aware that development, if not moderated, will continue to expand until there’s no place left to develop. Also, as Bermuda’s population-density and development-density rise, application processes can be expected to be more complex and hence slower — especially on our protected beaches and parklands . In any case Bermuda’s beaches should not seek to copy every sometimes-tacky feature that pops up on beaches elsewhere.

Bermuda’s beaches are unique and exquisitely beautiful. Some of them should be kept that way.