

David Chapman wrote:

"Private enterprise is just that – private, and the government is not interfering with private enterprise as some have asserted as the land does not belong to the government, it belongs to Tucker's Point. Government is only acting as a facilitator to allow businesses to take place. If Tucker's Point and the companies associated with it go bankrupt or succeed than let them do so! What business is this of anyone unless they be share holders?"

Response:

Actually, Mr. Chapman, it is the people's business if land previously zoned to disallow any development, and therefore part of Bermuda's bank of protected land, has its protective zoning altered by the SDO to enable housing development. The government ought to be doing the people's business and protecting the people's assets by enforcing the laws, not overturning laws to benefit a private enterprise.

David Chapman wrote:

"It seems the real challenge for Dr. Wingate and special interests groups such as BEST is that land that is currently 'green' will now become 'brown'. However, if the SDO is adhered to, including its conservation management plans, cave preservation orders and landscape principles, the ecological services that this land currently provides will be retained."

Response:

This is incorrect. The SDO converts acres of land (see below) from Recreation, Woodland, Coastal and Cave Conservation zoning to residential 2 zoning standards. That means that instead of the acreage being forested or otherwise "green" it will be converted to concrete and asphalt (in large measure) and a manicured landscape. Even if the SDO is adhered to to-the-letter, it would be impossible for that converted land to provide the same "ecological services". In any case, given a) that Tucker's Point has already reneged on a promise to allow Dr. Wingate and Bermuda cave expert Dr Tom Iliffe to examine the caves and other environmental features, and b) that the government's enforcement of Planning laws is already weak and growing weaker due to budget cuts, it is questionable that the SDO WILL be adhered to.

David Chapman wrote:

"It must be remembered that Bermuda's development is governed by the Bermuda Development Plan. Anyone can view the zoning at <http://www.planning.gov.bm>. This being said, this area is already zoned for development, albeit in different classes (some open space/recreational, some residential and some tourist, etc.). That which is zoned open space, nature reserve or recreational will remain so under the proposed Tucker's Point development plan as it is published currently."

Response:

This is, as stated before, incorrect. While the SDO text as published does not expose the previous zoning of areas on which housing development will be allowed, referring to the Zoning maps in the Bermuda Development Plan shows that the following acreages of protectively zoned lands will be converted to building lots once the SDO is issued:

- * Glebe Hill: 3.279 acres converted from Cave & Woodland Reserve to Residential 2;
- * Paynter's Hill: 3.545 acres converted from Cave & Woodland and nature reserve to Residential 2;
- * Paynter's Road: 0.421 acres converted from Cave & Recreation to Residential 2;
- * Paynter's Road: 0.591 acres converted from Cave & Recreation to Residential 2;
- * South Road: 0.574 acres converted from Cave & Recreation to Residential 2;
- * Harrington Sound Road: 0.458 acres converted from Cave & Coastal Reserve to Residential 2;
- * Harrington Sound Road: 0.799 acres from Coastal Reserve to Residential 2;
- * The Stables: 4.051 acres, a portion of which converted from Cave & Woodland Reserve to residential & mixed use (10 semi-detached plus 24 3-storey units);
- * Quarry Hill: 9.251 acres from Cave & Woodland reserve to Residential 2;
- * Whitecrest Hill: 40.53 acres, a major portion of which converted from Woodland and Nature Reserve to Residential 2.

Total: over 63 acres.

David Chapman wrote:

"It is not the SDO that BEST seems to have a contention with but the development itself."

Response:

Wrong. The SDO overturns protective zoning on about 63 acres of land. Once the SDO is granted, TPC (or whoever they might sell the land to) will have the legal right to build on that land, a right they do not have at present. Once the SDO is granted, the only thing left that the public can comment on is details of development. BEST is opposed to the PRINCIPLE that housing development is to be allowed on land that has, up to now, been under protective zoning. The SDO would establish that PRINCIPLE, that's why we oppose it.

David Chapman wrote:

"Government is only acting as a facilitator to allow businesses to take place. If Tucker's Point and the companies associated with it go bankrupt or succeed then let them do so! What business is this of anyone unless they be share holders?"

Response:

The government is indeed making TPC's business its own. Government is overturning protective zoning to enable TPC to service its loans. It is not merely a facilitator, it is serving up 63 acres or so of previously protected land specifically to stave off TPC's bankruptcy. I agree with Mr Chapman that they should succeed or fail as any other company. However, the government has taken on TPC's business, trading Bermuda's conservation heritage for the benefit of TPC's shareholders.

David Chapman wrote:

"...the Bermuda Plan does have designated National Park and nature reserve spaces that the ordinary Bermudian can have access to and with the addition of Mangrove Lake as part of this Tucker's Point deal more is being added to this 'green bank'."

Response:

Two points:

1) People derive "ecological services" from open space and woodlands even if they don't have direct access. As an example, we in Bermuda benefit from the oxygen generated by forests in Amazonia and Africa.

2) As for Mangrove Lake (which TPC is "donating" to Bermuda), the lake is so polluted that it is dangerous for its inhabitants. (As an aside, the condition of this lake does not reflect well on TPC's self proclamation of being stellar environmental stewards.) Donating the Lake to Bermuda transfers the responsibility and expense of cleaning it up to the government and the people of Bermuda and lets TPC off that particular hook.

Mr. Chapman suggests that everyone should do what he did, that is "read the SDO in full, look at the Tucker's Point Development maps and study the Bermuda Plan." But if someone with two MSc degrees and working on his PhD could get it so wrong after all that "independent research", how does an ordinary member of the public stand a chance?

Now I expect that Mr. Chapman will, as a principled scientist should, either back up his statements with evidence, or recant them. We will see...