

Objection to Ta' Cenc development

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A group of 113 people have recently sent a strong objection to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority regarding application PA 5277/96: To develop Ta' Cenc area into "Malta's first heritage park" and "multi-ownership tourist hotel development".

This proposal seeks to double the size of the existing hotel, erect another hotel (Sannat Hotel) and construct 67 villas and 49 "bungalows", all in an Outside Development Zone (ODZ) area.

The reasons for the objection are as follows:

1. The buildings, especially the envisaged villas and bungalows, will cause irreversible harm to the flora and fauna that inhabit the Ta' Cenc garigue, including unique species that can only be found in this area.
2. The proposal seeks to build in an area which is strictly Outside Development Zone and which should never be allowed any form of building as per Structure Plan policies. To allow such a development negates the very concept of ODZ areas. Furthermore, the proposed villas and bungalows go directly against legally binding Policy TOU 10, that limits further buildings "to the vicinity of the existing Ta' Cenc Hotel".
3. As per Mepa's Gozo Comino Local Plan 2002 Approved Draft: "11 per cent of the total dwellings in Gozo are vacant. Only 53.8 per cent of residences in Gozo are occupied all the year. A further 5,500 plots are available within the Development Zone. This is more than three times that required." We therefore fail to understand why Mepa should even begin to entertain any proposal to build on ODZ areas.
4. As per Mepa's GCLP 2002 Approved Draft, Ta' Cenc cliffs are important nesting sites for migrating and wintering birds, including the largest colony of Cory's shearwater in the Mediterranean. These colonies are disturbed by human presence and light pollution. As proposed, Sannat Hotel is in close proximity to the cliff edge and will undoubtedly drastically disturb the bird colonies.
5. Finally, this proposal will continue destroying the very reason why Gozo is still attractive. The difference is that, instead of a gradual destruction, this proposal seeks to deal a massive blow from which Gozo will certainly not recover. This "development" will only create short-term monetary gains to the benefit of a few individuals and result in a long-term loss of the charms that create a tourist attraction in the first place. Mepa should reject this proposal outright, and ask the so-called developer to submit another application that is in line with the structure plan.

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