

“The Bermuda National Trust is enormously saddened that the approval for this development was decided so soon in the House of Assembly. The proposed SDO was only made public in February. Given the major implications and resulting impacts of permitting this bill, ‘in principle’ or otherwise, and taking into account information provided by such experts as eminent conservationist Dr. Wingate, we mistakenly were of the impression that the public’s input would be given a degree of weight.

We cannot stress enough to the public that this SDO, as we understand it, paves the way for saturated development and the fragmentation of practically all of the remaining natural habitats, beautiful vistas and woodland in and around the Castle Harbour area; all of which make their own vital and *priceless* contribution to Bermuda’s economic and tourism health.

The Government, through the Ministry of the Environment, came to the end of years of painstaking work and an island-wide public consultation to create the 2008 Bermuda Plan; which only became operative on July 1st 2010. This is the plan, along with its predecessors, which have protected this area since at least 1983, and the plan that identifies the majority of the areas threatened by this SDO as places so significant due to their ecology, visual amenity and natural and geological features that practically all forms of development were prohibited, except where necessary for their conservation, enhancement or enjoyment.

We appreciate that the Ministry of the Environment has included mitigation measures as set out in the SDO by way of conditions for final approval. However, the 2008 Bermuda Plan was to preserve the integrity of these natural areas in their entirety and to prevent the encroachment of any development into them. We cannot foresee in any way how the same protections can be achieved through mitigation within the proposed development.

Bermuda’s future is dependent on our cultural, environmental, economic and social well being and we cannot underscore enough how Bermuda’s attractiveness and green spaces contribute toward our socio-economic health. Our tourism product was founded on the island’s uniqueness, attractiveness and character and with each large-scale development saturating Bermuda’s remaining green spaces, the importance of these areas increases exponentially in the face of what can only be described as rapid and irrevocable urbanisation.

The Bermuda National Trust does congratulate the House of Assembly for passing a bill which allows for all future SDOs to be debated and ultimately approved by the House. However, as we have said many times before, we consider the involvement of the community in the planning and development processes key to successful developments and we feel strongly that full public input leads to better decisions.