

It's a war zone



TOO CLOSE Critics of the development fear it will result in pollution of nearby Moreton Bay marine park green zones.

Moreton Mayor refuses to bow to State Government

Exclusive

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THE State Government looks set to override Moreton Regional Council and approve a \$628 million residential, marina, golf course and business precinct on the environmentally sensitive Caboolture River that feeds a Moreton Bay green zone.

And Mayor Allan Sutherland is furious.

At tomorrow's council meeting he will table a letter from Planning Minister Stirling Hinchliffe, who has effectively taken decision-making out of the council's hands.

Mr Hinchliffe says in the letter Co-ordinator-General Col Jensen will now be the ultimate decision-maker.

Cr Sutherland, the Mayor of Queensland's third-biggest council, said: "Why bother having a council if the State Government is going to overturn its decisions?"

"The state seems determined to ride roughshod over the wishes of Moreton's 360,000 residents.

"We are not wearing it.

"I will declare war on the State Government," he said.



AT STAKE: An artist's impression of the proposed development, which is strenuously opposed by the Moreton Regional Council.

Cr Sutherland said the North Harbour project would require dredging of up to 9km of the river and an internationally-recognised bird habitat on wetlands at the mouth of the river.

The council voted against the eastern half of the proposal, including the marina, fearing dredging would result in sediment run-off harmful to Moreton Bay marine park green zones.

Council experts also warned of bank erosion caused by boats and flooding in low-lying areas.

However, the State Government had declined to release to the council an Environmental Protection Agency report on the project.

Cr Sutherland and his deputy, Cr Greg Chippendale, suggested this indicated a cover-up.

Cr Sutherland said the developer, Northeast Business Park Pty Ltd, also wants residential towers up to 12 storeys, higher than allowed under the town plan.

"We had between 20 and 30 town planners, environmental scientists, traffic, drainage engineers and other professionals work on this for two years," he said.

"Now it seems their work was for nothing."

A spokesman for the developers would not comment.

The plan

Cost: \$628 million

Features

- Mix of residential
- Marina
- Golf course
- Business precinct

Location

Environmentally sensitive Caboolture River that feeds a Moreton Bay green zone

But CEO Jeff Smith boasts on the project's website that the project will be bigger than Sanctuary Cove, ultimately providing up to 13,600 jobs.

Mr Smith said the project would deliver economic diversification, higher-skilled jobs and attractive living and working environments.

Under a headline, "North Harbour given green light", Mr Smith seems to pre-empt the final decision.

Nevertheless, he welcomes Mr Hinchliffe's intervention and says the proposal enjoys wide public support.

Cr Sutherland said he has invited Premier Anna Bligh to inspect the river and its environmental values.

"You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that dredging 9km of the river will pollute the bay," he said.

"If Stirling Hinchliffe is not happy with our handling of the matter, he should sack us for incompetence.

"We have an utterly professional team who looked at every aspect of this project and we found real problems. We have flood modelling that will rock your socks.

"Caboolture River is already an ailing river, given an 'F' rating by Healthy Waterways."

Mr Hinchliffe says he is perturbed by the Moreton Council and will meet Cr Sutherland this week to explain his letter threatening to call in the project.

"I am not 100 per cent satisfied the grounds of refusal by Moreton Bay Regional Council were justified," he said.

"For this reason, myself and Department of Infrastructure and Planning representatives are meeting with the council this week before a final decision is made."

Mr Hinchliffe said he did not want to elaborate on the "technical issues" in dispute.

"And I'm perturbed by the way they are carrying on," he said.

"A calm and rational process is the way to go forward, rather than shouting about it."

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