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A **LAWYER** and planning expert have highlighted an inconsistency within the proposed zone change in the draft Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2040 (KLLP2040) in regard to the historic Vivekananda Ashram in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

The rezoning designates Lot 33, Section 72 – which is the Vivekananda Ashram site – as a commercial development area within a heritage zone.

Lawyer and local government expert Derek Fernandez said such a zone change contradicted the National Heritage Act 2005, which provides for the conservation and preservation of national heritage, natural heritage, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, underwater cultural heritage, treasure trove and related matters.

“Additionally, it affects neighbouring lots within the heritage zone, including SJK (T) Vivekananda and SMK Vivekananda in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

“There is no reasonable basis for zoning the Vivekananda Ashram site as a major commercial zone within a heritage area as this will lead to confusion and conflict in the future,” he said.

He was commenting on *StarMetro*’s March 23 report, which highlighted residents’ concerns regarding the rezoning of the land surrounding the heritage building for high-density commercial development at a Save Kuala Lumpur Coalition briefing.

Fernandez pointed out that the correct zoning should be for private community facilities within a heritage zone.

He said it had been designated as a facility, utility and infrastructure zone within a heritage zone in the draft Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020 (KLLP2020).

But when the KLLP 2020 was gazetted, he said, the same area was switched to mixed development.

‘Proposed changes can lead to confusion’

Rezoning of Vivekananda Ashram in KL draft plan contradicts National Heritage Act, says expert



(From right) Save Vivekananda Ashram Group member P. Tamilwanan, Deva Kunjari and businessman S. Raja Singham presenting objection forms to a DBKL officer at the city hall headquarters.



Fernandez says the rezoning also affects neighbouring lots within the heritage zone.

He added that the change was among some 270 made to the draft plan, which were not part of the original proposal and

included as an addendum based on development orders.

“Now once again it is proposed that the area be changed to commercial development with no explanation as to why the original zoning cannot be maintained, especially as it has been gazetted under the National Heritage Act 2005,” said Fernandez.

As such, he is calling on the government to investigate the issue and the other 200-plus changes made because of the impact they will have on sustainable development.

Meanwhile, 780 objection forms opposing the rezoning of Vivekananda Ashram were submitted to Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) on Monday.

Among those advocating for the ashram’s preservation is lawyer Deva Kunjari Sambanthan.

She said more objections were coming in as she has been receiving calls from people across the country on the issue.

“Since we have until April 15 to put in our objections, we will be coming again to DBKL.

“We don’t need to keep adding more steel and glass structures in high-density areas like Brickfields.

“Our city’s old buildings, the 100-year-old structures that make the city unique and special, must be protected and preserved because it tells a story of who we are; it’s our legacy for future generations,” she added.