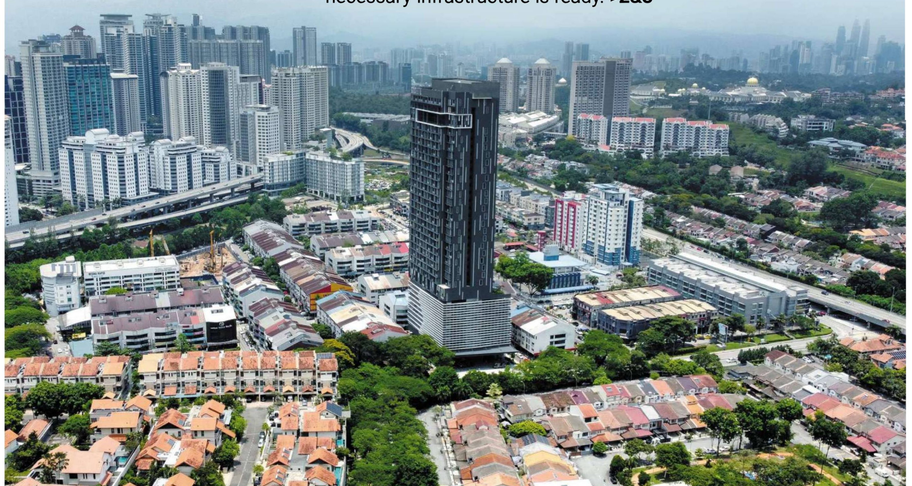
Suburb *stretched thin*

Desa Sri Hartamas folk struggle with overcrowding and strained resources as rapid development outpaces essential facilities. They want Kuala Lumpur City Hall to pause more project approvals until necessary infrastructure is ready. **>2&3**



Hemmed in: Bird's eye view of Desa Sri Hartamas and the surrounding areas. — IZZRAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

People waiting for buses in the rain at a temporary bus stop in Jalan Sri Hartamas 22. — Photos: LEW GUAN XI/The Star

Growing pains in Desa Sri Hartamas

Locals fear traffic woes, lack of public facilities may worsen with more development in KL suburb

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WITH up to seven major developments planned in Desa Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur, residents and traders are getting concerned about overcrowding.

According to their projections, these developments over 8ha would see several hundred new residential and commercial units built in the upmarket Kuala Lumpur suburb.

Desa Sri Hartamas Owners and Traders' Association president Abu Bakar Ibrahim told *StarMetro* this would mean more cars in the area once these projects are completed.

"The traffic in the area is already quite heavy.

"Motorists pass our area through roads such as Jalan 19/70a to access the Duta-Ulu Kelang Expressway, Damansara-Puchong Expressway, and the North-South Expressway.

"A lot more cars will flock into the area as hundreds of new units will be built. This will make the streets even more congested," he said.

Abu Bakar claimed Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) approved the projects without public engagement.

"The developers are supposed to conduct traffic and social impact assessments when proposing significant development projects like these.

"However, most developers would only conduct the assessment around their project areas without considering the overall impact.

"DBKL should not have approved the projects until a full-fledged study for the whole area was done," he said.

He also said DBKL had earlier this year promised to conduct a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) of the projects.

"We have not received any updates since then. The assessment report is very important to give us more strength to stand for ourselves," he said.

Besides the traffic woes, residents and traders also raised concerns about the lack of public facilities in the area as the spaces would be taken up by the development projects.

Fardan (left) and Desa Sri Hartamas Owners and Traders' Association secretary Chong Fook Khing.

Abu Bakar: More cars will flock into the area as hundreds of new units will be built. This will make the streets even more congested.

Kiara View Residents Association president Fardan Abdul Majeed said land sold to the developers could have been used to build facilities such as carparks, public transport hubs, and public toilets.

"Currently, bus users have to wait for the buses at a so-called temporary bus terminal in Jalan Sri Hartamas 22.

"They are exposed to the sun and rain, when there should have been a proper bus stop or station for them.

"If every public facility or infrastructure is removed to accommodate developers, how is the government taking care of the people's interests?" he said.

Desa Sri Hartamas Owners and Traders' Association vice-president Linda See also said the site of one of the proposed developments could affect the temporary bus stop.

Parking woes

Desa Sri Hartamas resident Datuk Mohamed Shukri Mohamed Zain said there was already lack of parking spaces in the area, which he attributed to massive developments previously approved by DBKL.

He said the upcoming high-density developments would take up land that could have been used to address the parking shortage.

"DBKL should stop approving further developments in the area as the roads simply cannot bear the additional traffic volume," he said.

He also said the roads around the commercial area were often choked up even during non-peak hours.

"Jalan 23/70a, which is the main road outside the commercial area, is often congested with cars parked illegally on the roads. A lot of double parkings also happen there.

"Illegal parking also happens at designated loading spots reserved for lorries, especially those behind a convenience store. The lorries are then forced to park along Jalan 23/70a, contributing to traffic jams," he said.

DBKL and the police, he said, should issue summonses and tow away cars of errant drivers.

"Enforcement agencies should also place their officers on the ground at all times. Knee-jerk actions are often ineffective.

Parking space shortage results in cars parked on both sides of Jalan 26/70a.

Lorry drivers are forced to load goods at the junction between the back lane of Jalan 26/70a and Jalan 23/70a due to insufficient parking spaces.

(Below) Jalan 19/70a is one of the major roads in Desa Sri Hartamas that the motorists use to access the Duta-Ulu Kelang Expressway, Damansara-Puchong Expressway, and the North-South Expressway.

"DBKL could also consider deploying AI-incorporated cameras to automatically record and issue summonses to motorists parking illegally on these roads. This will automatically stop the errant drivers from doing so," he said.

Grocery shop worker Muhammad Al Siddiq, 30, blamed the bad traffic conditions in the commercial area on poor traffic planning and management.

The grocery shop he works in is located in Jalan 26/70a, which according to him, has a main road that is narrower than the back lane.

"The main road has only one lane while the back lane has two. However, only the main road has parking lots.

"The authorities are approving more and more construction projects but refuse to add more parking bays in the area," he said.

He also said their lorries were forced to park in the back lane to load goods due to the insufficient parking spaces in the front road.

"We are definitely afraid of the fines imposed by the authorities. However, we have no choice because there is simply not enough parking space," he said.

DBKL's response

In a statement to *StarMetro* to explain the situation in Desa Sri Hartamas, DBKL confirmed it had approved five of the seven development projects in the area including residential, commercial, service apartments along with a medical centre. It, however, did not disclose the exact locations of the projects.

It also said that the two remaining projects had yet to receive planning approval.

DBKL said it has engaged with affected residents to get opinions before approving the development projects.

Developers are also required to establish a communication strategy to explain the projects to the residents before, during, and after construction, it added.

DBKL said all development projects must comply with conditions including providing public facilities such as parking lots.

A Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) on the surrounding area must also be carried out on the proposed developments, it said.

On the SIA, DBKL said it would appoint certified consultants to identify the possible social impacts and provide recommendations on the social impact management plan (SIMP).

It added that it was still in the process of appointing the consultants.

On the bus stop in Jalan Sri Hartamas 22, DBKL emphasised that it was only temporary, and its location might change following the new development projects.