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THREE connected roads in Bangsar that are home to vibrant businesses face an uncertain future as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) proposes rezoning the area from major commercial back to residential.

The proposal, which involves 32 lots on Jalan Abdullah, Lengkok Abdullah and Lorong Abdullah, has sparked strong opposition from business and property owners.

They warned that this move could lead to plummeting property values, disrupted investments and a loss of confidence in the city's planning policies.

Representatives of 56% of the affected properties have expressed their disapproval, stating that the change threatens to undermine years of investment.

Many property owners say that they specifically invested in the area because of its major commercial zoning under Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2020 (KLLP 2020).

They are appealing to DBKL to consider the long-term implications and make commercial zoning permanent instead of revisiting it with each local plan.

Notable restaurants on Jalan Abdullah could be adversely affected, along with an aged care facility, legal firms and security services in the area.

“Downgrading the zoning from commercial to residential sets a dangerous precedent that will undermine investor confidence,” said Datuk Muhammad Shapiae Mat Ali, a spokesperson for the affected business owners.

“It could open the floodgates for other residents to demand similar downgrades, rendering commercial areas no longer safe for investors,” he said.

He further cautioned that the move could leave the area deserted, like Jalan Gelenggang in Bukit Damansara where abandoned houses stand in stark contrast to bustling commercial developments nearby.

### Proposed rezoning

The proposed changes were outlined in the draft Kuala Lumpur Local Plan 2040 (KLLP 2040) earlier this year, catching many business owners by surprise.

The draft categorises properties on Jalan Abdullah into a few zoning classifications – residential 1, residential 2 and lot amalgamation.

Under residential 1, properties numbered 23 to 37 are allowed to build up to three storeys.

For residential 2, properties numbered 11 to 21, as well as those on Lorong Abdullah and Lengkok Abdullah, can have buildings up to 15 storeys high.

For lot amalgamation, where three lots are merged, structures exceeding 15 storeys are permitted.

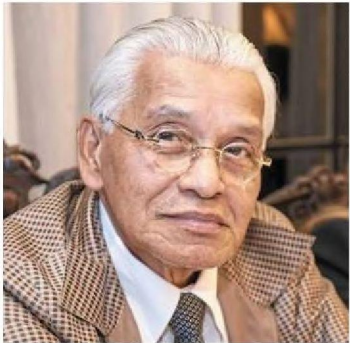
“This unprecedented move has caused significant concern among business and property

# Zoning debate divides Bangsar neighbourhood

Businesses warn of economic risks while residents push for preservation



A house owner in Jalan Abdullah hangs a banner in protest of high-rises being built in his neighbourhood. — Photos: YAP CHEE HONG/The Star



Muhammad Shapiae says downgrading the zoning sets a dangerous precedent.



Lim invested RM2.8mil to develop his property into an elderly care centre.



Ksharmini has opposed efforts to commercialise her neighbourhood for years.



Fahmi says the shift from major commercial to residential was requested by the residents.

a thriving restaurant.

“When I purchased the bungalow in 2017, the bank valued the loan at RM9mil, but Kuala Lumpur Lands and Mines Office (PTGWP) valued it at RM13mil because of its commercial status.

“Reverting to residential zoning means we will lose the substantial investments we have made,” he said.

Lim shared similar sentiments, pointing out that his elderly care centre, which cost RM2.8mil to develop, provided an essential service to the community.

“If it reverts to residential, we will suffer significant losses.

“This centre offers peace of mind to families, especially those living abroad, knowing their elderly loved ones are well-cared for here,” he said.

Bangsar Lutheran Church leader HC Leong also voiced objections to the change, urging DBKL to maintain the major commercial status until the Jalan Abdullah property is officially

rezoned as a religious building.

Muhammad Shapiae felt that the rezoning would also lead to property owners losing rental income potential.

“They will have no incentive to invest in maintaining their properties. The area risks falling into neglect,” he added.

### Support for rezoning

In contrast, long-standing residents have welcomed the proposed rezoning, citing concerns about over-commercialisation and its impact on infrastructure and quality of life.

“We have opposed efforts to commercialise our neighbourhood for years,” said 54-year-old Ksharmini Thanigasalam.

“The infrastructure cannot handle the strain and the peace of our homes is disrupted,” she said.

Similarly, resident Ratnasothy Kandiah felt relieved when she heard the news.

“I have lived in this house for 80 years, having moved here as a child.

“When I heard that our area is being rezoned back to residential, I felt relieved.

“However, I regret that it was zoned commercial for a time, as this allowed the approval of a 34-storey high-rise right next to my bungalow and a 62-storey tower at the back.

“Rezoning back to residential will, at the very least, prevent further development,” she added.

Also all for the rezoning proposal is long-time resident Mooi Lau Chan.

“My house has been home to four generations of my family.

“There is no logic in commercialising a historical and heritage area that was developed between 1929 and 1940.

“Reverting our neighbourhood back to residential will ensure it remains liveable and preserves its unique charm.”



During lunch hour, the road is often filled with cars as people come to enjoy a meal at the various eateries in the area.

“The distinctive character of our area is something the city should take pride in,” she added.

Likewise, Dr Padma Soosai was happy to hear about the proposed rezoning.

“It will help ease the traffic issues we have been struggling with on Jalan Abdullah,” said the resident.

“The roads are so congested that two cars can barely pass each other, let alone emergency service vehicles.

“This decision will also help preserve the little green spaces we have left and shield residents from the noise and air pollution caused by commercial activities,”

said Dr Padma.

Save Kuala Lumpur (SKL) chairman Datuk M. Ali said the area was one of the city's earliest organised housing estates.

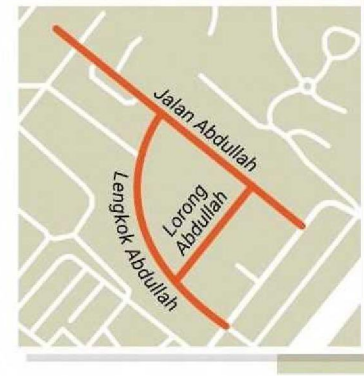
Its residents, many of whom have inherited properties across generations, hold deep emotional and historical ties to their homes.

“The area has been a traditional, generational residential enclave since its inception.

“Without engaging the local community, DBKL made a decision to change the zoning to major commercial with a high plot ratio.

“This decision is entirely at odds with the desires of the

### Proposed land rezoning for Jalan Abdullah, Lengkok Abdullah and Lorong Abdullah



Owners opposed to the proposed zone change	
Lot number	
51	279
290	87
53	91
55	93
57	304
82	89
83	94
370	210
278	100

Source: Draft KLLP 2040

original residents.

“There is an urgent need for DBKL to consider the implications of its planning decisions,” said Ali.

He said this area should be protected as a heritage site, given its historical significance.

“The existing infrastructure for electricity and water is already strained and roads here cannot accommodate increased traffic.

“Flood risks are also high because of the limited capacity to expand the drainage system,” he added.

Ali also pointed out incidents of inadequate fire hydrant performance during recent fires, which required water tankers to be brought in.

The challenges, he noted, highlighted the area's inability to support high-density mixed-use development.

“DBKL's approvals for unsustainable developments risk turning these housing estates into future slums.

“We strongly appeal to the cur-

rent mayor to put an end to these plans before it is too late.”

### Busy enclave

When *StarMetro* visited the area recently, it was evident that many properties had been transformed into thriving businesses.

There were restaurants such as Bangalow 37, Lubuk Bangku and Hux Cafe, several commercial carparks operating on vacant land, an elderly care centre, a church, security service offices, a car wash and a pet centre.

Just a short distance away is a low-density, 180-unit residential suite tower as well as an upcoming project featuring apartments and office buildings.

During lunchtime, the area is particularly congested, with cars parked on both sides of the roads as people visit the popular restaurants.

While some restaurant owners have hired parking attendants to manage the situation, traffic remains hectic on busy days.

Police were also observed issuing summonses to vehicles that were illegally parked.

*StarMetro* reached out to Lembah Pantai MP Fahmi Fadzil, who said his office had not been contacted by business owners opposed to the rezoning.

However, residents in favour of reverting to residential had been in constant communication with his office.

“The shift from major commercial to residential was requested by the residents,” said Fahmi.

The draft KLLP 2040, launched in January this year, outlines the capital city's vision, focusing on land use planning and development intensity in line with the goals set in the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2040 (KLSP 2040) in accordance with the Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982.

The public was invited to submit their objections and feedback on the draft until April 15.

The draft KLLP 2040 is expected to be gazetted by the first quarter of 2025.