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Article rank | 30 Dec 2020 | The Cairns Post | BRONWYN FARR

Mill says project will be a sugar hit

THAI-owned MSF Sugar is objecting to a proposed retirement village and 51 expansive residential lots at Gordonvale, saying higher density development is needed – but also that the loss of cane land is perilous for its sugar mill.

Proponents – including Ross Straguszi, former director of the H&S Vision Group, which owned the Paradise Palms before going into liquidation in 2014 – want to build a 162-unit retirement village and 51 residential lots with a minimum size of 700sq m with frontage of 21.1m. The proposed development on 42.5ha on Draper Road was submitted in mid-November by Gilvear Planning on behalf of the estate of the late Rose Straguszi.

But MSF Sugar, which has the Mulgrave sugar mill at Gordonvale, said in its submission that large lot development was bad strategic planning and would be a “poor outcome for the community and for MSF Sugar”.

It said higher density development was required, but also flagged the loss of farmland could have disastrous consequences. “Cane land is disappearing at an alarming rate,” the submission states.

“The diminishing supply of cane will inevitably lead to the demise of the Mulgrave Mill – a concept known as ‘death by a thousand cuts’ unless steps are taken to address the decline.

“It is imperative that the council reject applications for the creation of so-called lifestyle lots.

“Instead, higher densities are what is required to accommodate growth in the large townships within the local government area and to protect the sugar industry in the city,” it stated.

MSF Sugar is owned by the Mitr Phol Group, the world’s fifth largest sugar producer.

It says the township of Gordonvale grew around its Mulgrave Mill over 100 years and “forms part of the fabric of the community”.

MSF Sugar operated four mills including Gordonvale, but in August, Rural Funds Management bought 5409ha of farmland owned by MSF Sugar at Maryborough – and three months later, MSF Sugar announced the 126year-old Maryborough Mill would close. Residents south of Cairns have had limited options for aged care for generations.

Gordonvale has the Pyramid Residential Care Centre – a 52-bed high-care nursing home – but there is no facility for retirees on the lower-needs end of the spectrum.

The development application says the plan is for residents in the retirement facility to live in familiar surrounds long term, in most instances with their life partner, for the rest of their lives.



The project is yet to be assessed by council.

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