

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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In December 2004 the Government announced the award by tender of a former MOD property known as “The New Aloes” to a company called Historic Buildings Conservation (Gibraltar) Ltd. This is a company that has other interests in Gibraltar and is linked to the commercial developments at the former Shepherd’s Capurro Marina, the sea area in front of it, the BP petrol station next door, and the office block next to the Victoria Stadium.

The tender, which the Government said was the highest of 78 received, was in the sum of £ 410,000. The surface area of the plot of land at The New Aloes was 1595 square metres at the time that it went out to tender, and the surface area of the buildings on the site was 234.87 square metres.

This means that in terms of the cost per metre of surface area of the site, The New Aloes cost £ 257.05 per square metre. This has produced an even lower land value than even Lind House, which sold at £ 482.32 per square metre in relation to the plot size given by the Government.

Quite apart from the value for money element, the Opposition understands that the historic former MOD building has now been flattened completely to make way for a four-storey mini-block double the size of the original construction. The Opposition has

received photographs of the site which show that a number of trees and of greenery have all been destroyed in the process, as the new owners have had to level out the site by clawing back into the rock presumably in order to build the foundations.



This would not have been necessary had a new building been constructed on the footprint of the existing one.

The Government is already on record as having said that The New Aloes was very dilapidated, made mostly out of timber and that not everyone wants to live in a timber structure. The Opposition has been advised that this is not accurate. There

were indeed timber outbuildings on the site, but the main house was a solid masonry structure.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for Trade and Industry Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“This is all very well. However, when a plot of land with a former MOD building in it is allocated to a company called Historic Buildings Conservation (Gibraltar) Ltd, the public is somehow led to expect that the building will be conserved and restored. Instead it has now been completely destroyed.”

In January 2006 planning permission was sought for a new structure on the site which is much larger than the original house. The Government has described this as being of “a much higher quality” with “environmentally friendly features”. Although it is not clear what is meant by a “higher quality” building in this context, it is certainly regrettable that a building which has been described as having “environmentally friendly” features will be constructed only after so much disruption to the environment and the heritage of the area.

“The Opposition remains of the view that it is highly questionable whether the Government is obtaining the best deal for the public when it sells former MOD properties of this kind to developers. Not only are they selling off our heritage, they are doing so for cheap and in a manner where that heritage is lost forever,” said Dr Garcia.

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