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Developer in air war over theme park.

By Cherie Beach

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The company developing Aboriginal land under the Darwin flight path is paying aviation consultants in an attempt to defeat official opposition to the project.

Vysrose Pty Ltd director David Smith hired Airplan, which has worked for the RAAF and the Federal Airports Corporation in the past, to ensure the development did not interfere with the flight path.

Mr Smith wants to build a multimillion tourism and leisure park on vacant Aboriginal land he has secured a 99-year lease for, bounded by Bagot Road, Fitzer Drive, Totem Road and Dick Ward Drive.

Landed

The planned development is 1 km from the touchdown point on the runway where 30,000 aircraft, including fighter planes, jets and light planes, have taken off or landed in the past 18 months.

A MacDonaldis [sic] restaurant at the corner of Fitzer Drive and Bagot Road – where Mr Smith also plans to build shops – was approved last week.

The RAAF and FAC, which manages Darwin Airport, issued public warnings last week the development might cause or worsen an air disaster.

Industries and Development Minister Steve Hatton said last week the NT Government's policy since self-government to "maintain the integrity of that land for flight paths – had been clearly explained to the developers".

Mr Smith said: "We are prepared to compromise. The RAAF flies planes all over Darwin and they could drop a bomb anywhere."

An application to rezone the area from R6 to Su for the development to go ahead will go before the NT Planning Authority early next year.

Under the existing zoning the Gwalwa Daraniki Association, which holds title to the land under a Commonwealth lease, can build a flora and fauna sanctuary, cluster dwellings, a child care centre and sports venues.

In a letter to Mr Hatton, association president Helen Secretary said: "... it is rather evident that the uses of the land under the proposed rezoning will be far more suited to the site than the current uses permitted for development."

The approval of MacDonaldis should set a precedent for the development of the Kululuk [sic] land, she said.

Flats, a hostel, a motel, a restaurant, shops, promotional signs, a research centre and a veterinary clinic could be built under the current zoning with planning authority consent.

The same consent would be necessary under the proposed rezoning to build a light industrial area, a licensed club, service industry areas, showroom sales areas and a warehouse.

National standards for airport noise affected areas meant the area was too noisy for the development it was zoned for, Mr Smith said.

But hotels, public buildings, light industry and commercial buildings could be built in the area if the buildings were designed to sufficiently reduce noise.

Lighting would also be carefully designed and could be covered so it did not confuse pilots coming in to land, Mr Smith said.