

AUAN Raises concerns about latest amendment to Albox Town Plan

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Albox, in common with some other towns in the Almanzora valley has a serious problem with illegal houses that blights its reputation and its economic prosperity. Despite the passage of time, and much discussion with the town council and the Junta de Andalucía, the situation for the vast majority of those impacted has not changed and they still live with major legal uncertainty. 50 householders have been summoned to court this week alone for judicial proceedings involving their promoter.

After 4 years of denial and dithering, we had the inventory of 'irregular' houses which has (thus far) identified 7,000 houses in Albox. However, at this point in time, the town hall informs us that the inventory for Albox is incomplete and our members have been refused access to check their recorded details, despite the existence of data protection legislation which entitles them to do so.

We were advised in our initial meetings with the relevant branches of the administration that "micro surgery" was required to repair the damage caused by urban abuse. Well, it is pretty clear from the inventory that major surgery is required and, furthermore, that the doctor is not planning to tell the patient that he needs treatment!

We have long requested that a working party be established to allow for a rigorous and detailed study of this problem with the participation of representatives of the affected homeowners. We were told that 'lobbies' are not common in Spain. (A curious response given the reality of the numerous associations in Spanish society).

And now we have the first significant modification to the Albox Town Plan affecting 38 separate "rural settlements" between Albox and Saliente. (Rambla Saliente : Fuente-Oro, Saliente Alto, Aceiteros, Candidos, Marianos, Jimenez, Molinas, Rodriquez, Santa Barbara, Lugarico, Pocicas, Petacas, Leoncios, Patricios, Graneros, Fuente Carmen, Coloraos. Rambla Oria: Martinez, Fuente Mojon, Guinapos, Prieto, Simones, Llano Espino, Ventarique, Llanos Animas. Rambla Albox: Piedras, Fuente Capita, Quiles, Locaiba, Paredes, San Roque, Fuente Marques, Lobdar, Toretta, Molata, Segovias, Canico, Dira.)

The AUAN has commissioned a review of this amendment and we have some serious questions to ask!

Who benefits from this amendment?

Only a tiny proportion of our members' homes are impacted by this plan (18 to be precise). Why were these areas given priority over La Alhambra or La Horticheula for example?

Micro Surgery or Lethal Injection?

There is little good news for members who did make it onto this plan. Two homes in Canico and Pocicas respectively have been zoned on specially protected farmland (zona de protección de cultivos) and fifteen members' homes in Los Patricios, Parades and the urbanisation know as "Palmares" have been zoned on non urbanizable land protected by special legislation (suelo no urbanizable de especial protección por legislación específica). We believe the latter designation to be a drafting error but we have filed an objection for the avoidance of any doubt because a 'protected' designation places your home in a very bad position.

Irrespective of the drafting error, the 15 homes have effectively been abandoned as 'fuera de ordenacion', on rustic land, with no explanation as to how these houses will ever be regularised.

The Way Forward?

We submit that this amendment will be seen by some as another example of a paternalistic and non-participatory planning process which worsens the problem of illegal houses in Albox. We again call on our administration to establish a commission with representatives from the council, the Junta de Andalucía, the AUAN, and other interested entities or groups, in order to reassure residents that urban development is for the benefit of all its citizens and not solely in the interests of property developers, the well connected and other vested interests.