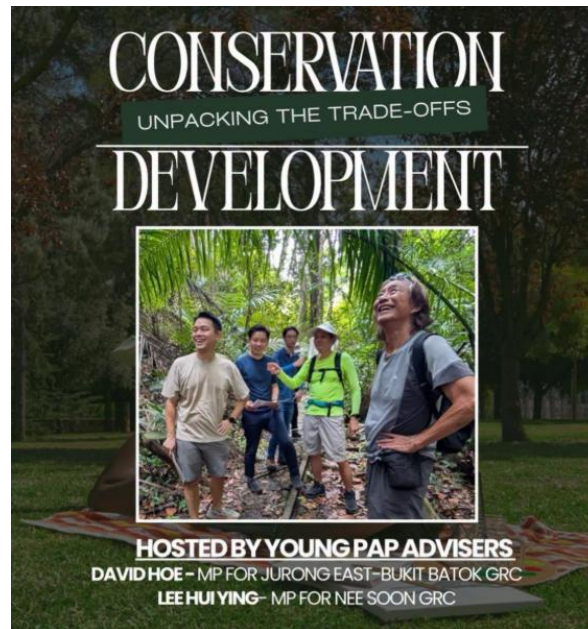


This is a summary of the dialogue session held at EtonHouse, Orchard Road, on 1 Aug 2026, hosted by Young PAP Advisers, MP David Hoe and MP Lee Hui Ying, and moderated by a member of the Nature Society.

Chatham House rules applied, so other participant names are not recorded.



The session started with an educational presentation of how an EIA report is commissioned. If a government agency eg JTC, LTA, requires an EIA report to be conducted, the NParks centralised system will call for the tender. URA regulates and approves the tender, then the other agencies like NParks, NEA, PUB, MPA etc get pulled in to collaborate on the execution of the EIA, as needed.

There was a presentation of the EIA life cycle, report contents, approach and scoping, baseline study, core objectives and values, as well as impact and mitigation.

A list of tradeoffs was shown, to facilitate discussion. These were:

- Housing affordability vs quality of life
- Cost of living vs continued economic growth
- Development vs intergenerational equity
- Productivity vs mental well-being
- Efficiency vs liveability
- GDP growth vs natural capital
- Short-term needs vs long-term resilience
- Land optimisation vs space to breathe
- Global competitiveness vs national identity
- Meeting today's needs vs protecting tomorrow's opportunities

Many questions were asked, both as a single large group, and subsequently in 4 smaller discussion groups. The following are questions asked in the large group (not necessarily in sequential order):

Feedback Period Is Too Short

Questions were asked as to why the feedback period for Maju and Gillman forests is so short, and the Nature Society was asked for their process in reviewing the EIA report. The Nature Society shared that they often go to the green spaces around Singapore, so when an EIA is issued, they can usually visualise what will be lost. The review will look at the various impacts in the EIA, and if the initial assessment is that it does not match the actual impact, they will look more carefully. The review takes a lot of time, and the time window for feedback is very short. Why 4 weeks? Why not 3 months?

A member of the Ecological Society said that the time for feedback is very short, and queried why it is the same regardless of the size of any proposed development. Maju forest is one month, and Long Island is also one month.

The further comments were that the EIAs look at specific sites. To do an EIA island-wide is costly, and also not feasible. However, certain areas and corridors are clearly important to protect e.g. central catchment area. NPark has an “EPE” program to protect corridors. It is not very good, but is being improved. That centers on “how to connect the fragments”.

Absence of input/leadership from Ministry of Sustainability and Environment

There were questions/comments about why the Ministry of Sustainability and Environment is not taking an active role in the redevelopment plans.

The Nature Society was asked whether they were shocked at the lack of leadership by MSE in the plans for deforestation.

The timing of the EIA

Questions/comments were made about the timing of the EIA i.e. it should be done before the decision to redevelop, not just to mitigate after the decision to redevelop has already been made.

The Nature Society shared that when an EIA is done, the case is already lost because there is no precedent for the decision to be reversed. Can only mitigate and give recommendations. There is no visibility about the urgency of the housing need, so there is no ability to help in the planning process. This is entirely up to the government agencies. The EIA only looks at the environmental impact.

The best time to get in the discussion is when the government is brainstorming the Master Plan, as that is when they are most open to feedback e.g. during the Long Island planning phase, a lot of nature groups gave feedback. For Gillman etc, it is important to

give feedback through the HDB channel – it is not useless. When the government decides to give public engagement, they will invite for Facebook discussion. If you wait till after the Master Plan is done, it is too late.

What is missing from the EIA

Some queried how the Ministries are valuing the other things of value in green spaces eg protection from urban heat, cultural value etc. There was a comment that the EIA does not represent the voice of the animal and other living creatures, nor the voice of future generations of Singaporeans.

Concern about mitigation measures

Questions were asked about whether the mitigation measures would be enforced.

Other alternatives

Some wondered if there were other technological solutions.

A comment was made about the government putting up a false choice between housing needs and environmental protection.

Tipping Point

Comment was made that if the population does not plateau, the future solutions will need to be more innovative. If forests are cut down, there will be human stress, less recreational areas etc. There was a recognition of housing need, but it must be balanced. “When do we say a stern No versus endless compromise?”

After the large group dialogue, a grassroots leader talked about her experience with the Cross Island MRT engagement 10 years ago, where discussion with many nature groups took place, and mitigation measures were put in place eg increasing the depth of the MRT by 50m.

In moving to the smaller group discussion, MP David Hoe asked each group to put up the top question they would like to ask Parliament. He mentioned that the role of the Parliamentarian is to pull together different perspectives, so it is important to also understand “What does the every man care about?”, citing his own brother’s feedback that a major concern is heat, given his work as a bread delivery driver. Likewise, some Maju residents had cited the concern that the proposed new flats at Clementi would be more expensive due to the higher engineering costs of building the flats on forest terrain. He mentioned that the feedback from the Gillman dialogue session reflected scepticism as to whether the public’s feedback is really going to make a difference. He said, Yes, it can make a difference, and “nothing is cast in stone”. He put up a poster with a link to providing feedback: tinyurl.com/savingmajuforest.



The Nature Society commented that the Gillman proposal will keep most of the native dominant forest, but will lose a large area of exotic forest. It will build a 30m corridor to Labrador Park, which is not optimal, but this was HDB's compromise. Could have been much better/wider. The overall impact will be major. Can we not develop instead? Gillman forest is the good connector between Southern Ridges and Labrador Park. Without it, the forests will be fragmented.

Previously at Keppel, the connectivity issues were considered too. Today, everything is still razed down.

The small groups were encouraged to put up their top question, and to put all the most pressing questions onto post-it notes.

Small Group Discussion (1 of 4)

There was discussion of mitigation measures. Someone talked about a resident's feedback at the Telok Blangah CC dialogue session that the mitigation measures are meaningless because similar promises were made to protect mature trees and Berlayer Creek, but in the end all but one shade tree and 2 coconut trees were cut down, and the mangrove trees have died, with the otter habitat lost. Even the boardwalk is closed. It was pointed out that the EIA itself makes caveats about the possibility that the margins of construction work may change, meaning that more forest may be lost than indicated in the proposal.

Participants talked about how this is not like other policies that can potentially be reversed, because once a forest is cut down, and housing put in place, it will never be recovered. As such, public input should be sought much earlier.

There was a discussion about how the optics were very bad eg announcements about new flats already made; Preston Rd residents told to vacate; feedback window being so short, etc. The inevitable conclusion was that the decision has already been made by the government to go ahead no matter what.

After the end of the small group discussion, the major concerns of each group were shared.

First group

1. Have all other solutions been exhausted?
2. Was there enough transparency re housing demand?
3. What was the decision-making process?

Second group

1. Need a more holistic assessment, not just flora/fauna.
2. Need more qualitative data for cultural value and opportunity cost etc.
3. Take reference from international studies.

Third group

1. Focus on results/interpretation of EIA.
2. Need more viewpoints, not just scientific. Social, cultural, include more nature groups.
3. A lot of EIA info is statistical. Need to increase accessibility/digestibility.
4. Timing of public feedback could be better. Instead of just mitigation, should take place earlier

Fourth group

1. Planet and place: Consider urban heat impact. Why do trees have to be cut? It is an irreversible situation.
2. Process: This should be more holistic, more transparent and take place much earlier. The feedback period should be longer.
3. People: If TFR is down, why do we need so many flats? The working class is more affected by urban heat impact. Need more representation.

Questions written on Post-it Notes

1. Redo the EIA such that it considers other factors like urban heat impact, not just for the people, but also the affected flora and fauna. Climate impact is also scientific, no?

2. EIAs should be done at the beginning of the planning process, not as an afterthought. And shared with the public.
3. EIAs should consider urban heat impact.
4. Don't touch the forest. Build in the already developed areas.
5. Local and regional technologies of forests – natural soaks for rain, heat, alongside flora and fauna
6. The sense I'm getting is a frustration about the way the government engages with the public and solicits their feedback. And this is NOT solely about the EIA process and the consideration of feedback. This is about the conversations and debates that would have informed the way we do development. We feel absent, disenfranchised, and ignored in such bigger sociopolitical debate. Debating how we can improve the EIA process is to address just the symptoms of disconnect between state and society. We do not feel that the process of government are transparent and responsive despite claims of its attempts to engage with various sectors of society.
7. Land allocation is an ancient endeavour. Some allocation space should be allocated for future generations ("space savings") for future generations to invest ("sustainability returns")
8. Rather than take more and more land for more flats, why not change the way flats are constructed (build higher)?
9. Broadly publicise how the BTO/housing need was assessed. Marriage/birth rate are down, so who is the over-development really for?
10. The effectiveness of the mitigants suggested, based on how they have been implemented previously.
11. The intersection of social work and environmental concerns – flooding, heat impacts and impacts on class/poor, environmental justice
12. Mitigation vs protection vs regeneration
13. How are we ensuring the voiceless are represented? I.e. Forest? My unborn son? The EIA is inherently biased by design, how are we continuously reviewing it for [...]?
14. Need for natural cooling systems. Considerations in irreversible decision – cutting trees.
15. Who is involved? When? How is information shared?
16. Ecological/social justice, working class to be included as most important.
17. Where did we learn about today's event? Last night! This AM! On social media, via email, very piecemeal.
18. Widen the ecological corridor so that it's more practical for the movement of wildlife.
19. MND to publish the answers to the queries on their website.
20. MSE should take a strong leadership role in protecting our forests.
21. Longer feedback "proportional".

22. We do not trust HDB because it only cares about its won KPIs. Silo government does NOT work.
23. Implementation of mitigation measures.
24. HDB did not keep its promises re mitigation measures at Keppel. Berlayer Creek is now destroyed.
25. Eco-friendly BTO
26. Future-proof (consideration for future generations)
27. Why can't we preserve first and only develop 100 years later after we've exhausted all opportunities to redevelop and intensify land we've already urbanised? Clearing forest is irreversible.
28. Less deforestation and more preservation, and giving more meaning to what preservation means to us, while still keeping the interest of Singaporeans.
29. Biodiversity vs BTOs – more transparency about the tradeoffs we are making.
30. Provide deeper transparency on the considerations for housing, heritage and the environment.
31. Before an EIA is commissioned, the government should hold a conversation on tradeoffs before going ahead. Why more HDB? Why X [...]?
32. More dialogue sessions that are more accessible to the public.
33. Accessibility of info.
34. I think not many people'those not interested in environment might not know about EIA, so can constantly promote to make more people know EIA exists.
35. Collaborate with National Youth Council to promote Young PAP related events.
36. That public opinion, opinion of experts, were taken into account, and that decisions have been made in the greater interest of national development.
37. That the social, human and climate impacts of deforestation have been studied, considered and mitigated.
38. To include engagement with Nature groups, public in all stages of the EIA planning.
39. Are we going to tear down HDB down the road due to insufficient occupancy because of lower TFR?
40. Multi-purpose nature reserve – combine interests and needs.
41. More viewpoints (breadth)
42. Biophilic design – human meets nature
43. Sustainable landmarks? New housing projects on the way perhaps? Possible wellness places for the mentally challenged? Are people willing to accept?
44. EIA shall consider the proposal of how to handle the plants, insects, animal.
45. The relocation of animals whether to a different part of the forest or a similar environment.
46. The proposed retained areas (PRA) can be expanded to host a more constructive environment for wildlife. Explore reducing HDB dwelling units proposed there.
47. Make the assessment more user-friendly.

48. Include a comparable cost figure to price the impact and solutions ie using data models to convert envt findings into smtg easily compared to, like estimating \$x million in extra cooling costs when conserving the forest.
49. Have more qualitative measurements on cultural value eg Long Island only does headcount at East Coast, but people did not [...].
50. Can we quantify and account for the effectiveness of wildlife shepherding in the preservation of wildlife and diversity for all projects with EIA?
51. Needs more documentation within the EIA about how the space plays into the larger corridors, and where the refuges these corridors link to are. Focus on protecting these refuges.