

Hills group pushes for plan update

DALE MILLER

WA-based property developer Port Bouvard is facing a potential showdown over its plans for Gidgegannup, with a community group calling on the company to reveal its intentions for the rural Perth Hills area.

Port Bouvard plans to build a satellite township on 483ha of land in Gidgegannup, about 42km north-east of the CBD.

The development will include about 1650 lots split between an urban town centre and a rural residential area, with a master plan detailing the company's vision due for release by the end of this year.

But the Gidgegannup Progress Association has raised concerns about the project, with chairwoman Sally Block claiming there had been no progress update from Port Bouvard since public workshops were held in May despite questions being sent to the developer.

"Port Bouvard claims they've had community consultation but after the workshops in May we really haven't heard a single thing from them," she said. "I know it's difficult for them in this economic climate (but) we need to know what they are proposing to do."

However, Ms Block questioned whether the current economic climate was forcing delays on releasing more details of the development.

The company's decision to put most of its WA assets on the block to pay off debt has raised growing doubts over the future of its projects.

Speculation over Port Bouvard's prospects has also been fuelled by last month's announcement that both chairman Michael Perrott and managing director Ross Neumann would step down from July 1 next year.

But Port Bouvard development director John Wroth said yesterday the company was ready to lodge the master plan and rezoning reports for Gidgegannup with the City of Swan and other agencies and would be contacting stakeholders in the coming weeks.

"We expect the masterplan will be rigorously reviewed and we look forward to discussing with the local community many of the exciting initiatives we are proposing," he said.

Port Bouvard bought the proposed rural-residential portion of land in September 2007, with the remaining payments for the planned town centre due by 2010 and 2011. The three adjoining sites making up the development will cost Port Bouvard more than \$80 million, with the developer previously predicting lots would be released by the end of 2010.

Ms Block said there was little objection to having a town site but she said retaining a rural zone around the intended urban centre to prevent suburban sprawl was a non-negotiable condition of development.