

Court blocks construction of petrol station above church



The administrative court on Thursday cancelled the town planning permit for the construction of a petrol station above the Church 'Our Lady of the Golden Cave' in Kato Deftera, vindicating residents who had staged protests against the planned construction.

The bells of the church, which is housed in a cave and dedicated to the Virgin Mary, rang out to announce the good news on Thursday.

The priest of the church and others had contested the town planning permit that was issued in 2016 in court. The permit had initially been refused but was later approved after an appeal. When construction work got underway, vibrations from the use of a road roller machine led to soil falling within the cave.

Concerned that the historic cave would collapse, residents and priests staged

protests and the issue even went to parliament where MPs urged the construction company to put a halt to the project.

The church is believed to date back to the early Christian period. The shape of this small church inside a cave is very rare in Cyprus.

The decorated walls of the cave have suffered great damage and the frescoes are no longer visible, but a large religious festival is held on August 15, the day of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary.

About 10 years ago, support work was carried out by the Antiquities Department, with grants from the Leventis Foundation and the late former president Tassos Papadopoulos.

— Source: in-cyprus.com