

Meeting	Public Hearing for EIA in relation to the following development permit application: PA 09407/17 - Amendments to PA 02135/94 for the Manoel Island Master Plan, including: Change in building configuration and increase in open spaces to achieve a better balance between built-up and open area, Reduction of 8,000 sq.m floor area of already approved development resulting from a decrease in massing, increase in residential component, decrease in commercial component and removal of offices, Re-design of access to Manuel Island and re-organisation of parking areas and berthing facilities, Alterations to breakwater to include a Helipad and Restoration of the existing Pay Office and Guard House. Site at, Manoel Island, Gzira, Malta.
Date	18 th June 2018
Duration	17:15 – 19:00
Location	St Clare’s College Gzira Primary , Triq il-Madonna tal-Ġebbla, Il-Gzira GZR 1567
ERA representatives	Kevin Mercieca (Deputy Director); Josianne Abela Vassallo (Team Manager, EIA)
Minutes taken by	Charmaine Zerafa (Administrative Assistant, ERA)

Mr. Kevin Mercieca opened the meeting giving details about the proposed development which is currently subject to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (*PA 09407/17 - Amendments to PA 02135/94 for the Manoel Island Master Plan, including: Change in building configuration and increase in open spaces to achieve a better balance between built-up and open area, Reduction of 8,000 sq.m floor area of already approved development resulting from a decrease in massing, increase in residential component, decrease in commercial component and removal of offices, Re-design of access to Manuel Island and re-organisation of parking areas and berthing facilities, Alterations to breakwater to include a Helipad and Restoration of the existing Pay Office and Guard House. Site at, Manoel Island, Gzira, Malta.*)

Details vis-à-vis the purpose of the meeting were provided, in particular that the meeting was part of the EIA process. It was also clarified that this was not the decision-taking meeting but was being held to present the EIA findings and to gather feedback from the public in due time for any relevant considerations to be factored in during the process.

Dr. Paul Gauci delivered a presentation explaining the studies carried out as part of the EIA.

Mr. Kevin Mercieca opened the floor for comments after the presentation.

Mr. Michael Briguglio (Sliema Local Council).

Mr. Briguglio pointed out that the current proposal is a clear improvement from the previous one. The EIA states that the traffic impact in terms of pollution is of a minimum level when compared to Gzira and Sliema. This however does not make much sense. It would have been more opportune to state that the impact is lower compared to said sites. As Sliema Local Council we agree with the proposal for a Green Travel Plan however we are aware, also from previous applications, that such plans are not implemented. Will there be anything binding for the implementation of such Green Travel Plan? The studies mention the re-use of material

resulting from excavation, again will there be anything binding such proposed approach or are these wish lists?

It should be noted that with regards to the land reclamation, Prof. Victor Axiak stated that there should be a plan covering the whole area in order not to have any negative impacts on water circulation.

The studies carried out in the 1990s proposed a new road in order to alleviate the impact from traffic. This new study does not mention the said option and we would like to know whether this has been discarded completely.

The Social Impact Assessment we are being presented with, is not adequate or in any way up-to standard. A proper Social impact study should be qualitative and quantitative; it should also be an ongoing study and not just a one-off exercise.

Mr. Kevin Mercieca (Environment and Resources Authority).

It should be clarified that the EIA assesses effects on human populations. The Social Impact Assessment does not form part of environmental assessment. The Social Impact Assessment should be carried out according to different Terms of Reference and the request for a Social Impact Assessment was not included in the terms of reference issued by the Environment and Resources Authority given that this type of study is not regulated by the Environment and Resources Authority.

Dr. Paul Gauci (EIA Coordinator).

The consultant that carried out the studies in relation to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment decided to include feedback from casual observers being sensitive receptors of this project. This however cannot be considered as a Social Impact Assessment. The Green Travel Plan included in the EIA has been proposed by the applicant and for the time being this is only a wish list. In order for this plan to be binding it has to be included in the development planning permit per se.

Joanna Spiteri Staines (Din I-Art Helwa).

Din I-Art Helwa is concerned with the bulk of the buildings at the very beginning of the island. The proposed massing is creating monumental buildings at the gate that do not work from an architectural and urban point of view. It is a barrier on approaching the island. From perusal of the landscaping plans it was noticed that there is a lack of monumental trees along the waterfront.

Din I-Art Helwa is also noticing a lack of study with regards to a proper water taxi/ferry service to help in easing the vehicular activity problem.

The idea of re-using the globigerina limestone resulting from excavations is an excellent proposal and we hope that this is accepted and carried out. We would like to suggest that since parking space is an issue and since trees cannot be incorporated in an underground parking; the area underneath the football pitch and the area underneath the yacht yard is used as a parking area in order for the other area to be developed as a green area.

We would like to see in place a second class water system not just for rain water but also for effluent. This would help in having a proper sustainable park all year round.

Din I-Art Helwa is glad to see that the pay office is being retained as it has very nice architecture features. From the photomontages presented one can notice the huge blank wall on the right hand side of Fort Manoel. This needs to be addressed in an architectural manner reflecting Mediterranean architecture. The proposed pedestrian bridge would require redesigning as well.

It would be good to have some information as to the use of Fort Manoel. It is believed that this will be used for cultural purposes however such a large site solely for cultural purposes may not be sustainable.

Ms. Claire Bonello (Manoel Island Foundation).

From the list of uses it was noticed that the uses for clusters 13 and 14 are missing. These are not present on the map being presented. Clarification with regards to this matter is being requested. The semi public space near the football ground is being presented as accessible to the public however managed privately. Is there any development envisaged for said area?

Perit Ivan Piccinino (Project Manager - MIDI).

It has to be noted that the semi public space near the football ground was earmarked for development in the original deed, however this has now changed and no development is being planned.

Ms. Claire Bonello (Manoel Island Foundation).

On behalf of Manoel Island Foundation I can confirm that MIDI have signed a guardianship agreement with the Foundation which specifies the use of the Fort including a mixture of both cultural uses and the possibility of retail space. The reason behind the retail space is to financially sustain, repair and maintain the Fort.

Michael Sciortino (Gżira resident).

The reports with regards to this development emphasise on high-end, luxury and exclusivity, however will any part of this project be affordable? Also the reports state that this development will be beneficial for the property in the surrounding areas (gentrification), mainly in Gżira, being that these will increase in market value. However will these be affordable also for the employees working at this new development?

The new roundabout and junction leading to Manoel Island will take up a part of the promenade. The high demand for property in the area will lead to more requests for restaurants and entertainment facilities including pleasure boats and their respective ticket stalls. These will lead to more take up of the promenade and less relief for this area.

From the proposed plans one can notice that the viewing corridors have been eliminated completely. The views of Valletta etc are now completely obstructed.

The new boundaries as illustrated on plans pass through the sea. Does this entail that part of the sea will be part of the project and thus not publically accessible? The slipway found in the area is the only one present in Gżira, Sliema and Ta'Xbiex. Such slipway has been completely ignored and removed from the proposal.

The helipad included in the development surely does not tally with a Green Travel Plan. This is in no way a green travel measure.

The studies carried out in relation to wind and wave effects did not take into consideration North-East storms. Being that the channel between Manoel Island and Gżira will be reduced the effects from the waves will be devastating on the boats in the area.

The North Harbours Local Plan emphasises on the embellishment of the promenade. Since the publishing of said Local Plan nothing has been done regarding the planned embellishment. The promenade has actually degenerated in view of the take up of areas by restaurant owners for the placing of tables and chairs. With the increase in demand for such entertainment spots this will continue to degenerate. Hotels have removed the alighting bays to be able to place tables and chairs and this is already causing havoc when it comes to traffic. While carrying out the traffic impact study did they take into consideration the new development; Fourteen-East, opening soon which will include a number of offices. Such development will increase the traffic in the area further.

Dr. Paul Gauci (EIA Coordinator).

It is important to point out the data in relation to traffic is a result of the traffic impact assessment. The baseline used for the traffic impact assessment includes projects and developments for which a planning permit has been granted but which are not yet finalised.

Ing. Marco Cremona (Consultant).

Residential units will be purchasing water from the government system. The second class water will only be used for irrigation purposes which is very seasonal. The operational costs of having a sewage treatment plant are very high when one considers that such treatment plant would need to be operational all year round even in winter when it is not required. A numerous number of trips from bowser trucks to carry sludge from the treatment plant to Magħtab would need to be effected. Water Services Corporation confirmed that the present sewerage system can sustain this development. For these reasons the option of having a centralised second class water system has been discarded.

Perit Ivan Piccinino (Project Manager - MIDI).

Way before the conclusions of the Green Travel Plan were presented, MIDI included water taxis and other green measures in the proposal. The boundaries illustrated on plans include the marina as this is part of the project, however this does not mean that there will be any further uptake of land or sea. The reclamation that will take place is obligatory as per agreements between the government and MIDI. Such reclamation will improve the circulation of water in the area. With regards to the slipway I would suggest that the developer should take this into consideration and include it in the project design.

The junction being proposed is in line with the Local Plan of 2006 and has been designed in collaboration with Transport Malta to specifically rationalise the traffic in the area.

Prof. Joseph Borg (Consultant).

The current water circulation in the area around Manoel Island is of high concern. The study carried out including modelling of the current situation and the resulting situation once the project is concluded. The present link underneath the Manoel Island bridge is extremely

important for the circulation of water. For this instance, the project includes a proposal to enlarge the bridge and thus enlarge the cross sectional area underneath such bridge. With this intervention the water flow is expected to increase by ten times and this should offset the obstructions present like the marina and land reclamation.

Perit Joe Bugeja (Consultant).

The marine study carried out included wave storms and wind from all directions. The results of such studies confirmed that the situation that will be created with the new channel (thirty meters wide) is acceptable, even during North Easterly winds.

Mr. Michael Sciortino (Gżira resident).

The boundary being indicated between Manoel Island and Gżira covers a part of the marine area. It should be clarified whether this means that such part of the sea will be owned by MIDI and if this is so, what would happen from the buoys present in this area.

Perit Ivan Piccinino (Project Manager – MIDI).

Such boundary is being indicated in that way following discussions with the Planning Authority to indicate the exact site. There is no intention to take up such area.

Ms. Claire Bonello (Manoel Island Foundation).

I would like to clarify that the marine area is of public domain and thus the current buoys will remain.

Mr. George Peplow (Consultant).

The traffic will increase as a result of this project. As indicated in the reports the traffic in 2025 will be of approximately 39,000. Due to the project this amount will increase by about 4,700 which is approximately 12% to 13%. The amounts of PM10 and NO2 were projected for the year 2025, which is the year when the project should be in operation. It resulted that the increase of such pollutants is expected to be of 7%. When compared to the Environment and Resources Authority's criteria and also international criteria these amounts have been considered as acceptable.

Joanna Spiteri Staines (Din l-Art Helwa).

It is a shame that the old bridge will be lost. The option to incorporate the old bridge in the new bridge design should be taken into consideration.

Perit Ivan Piccinino (Project Manager - MIDI).

Perit Piccinino confirmed that currently discussions with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage are being held to evaluate the possibility of retaining the historical part of the old bridge and amalgamate this with the pedestrian bridge.

Mr. Kevin Mercieca closed the meeting by confirming that the points raised have been recorded and noted. He also thanked the participants and invited them to send any further comments, preferably by email to eia.malta@era.org.mt, or by post to *'The Director, Environment and Resources Authority, Hexagon House, Spencer Hill, Marsa'*, by 25th June 2018.