

Environmental Impact Assessment

Schedule III

(Screening according to S.L.549.46)

ERA Reference no.: EA 00045/18
PA Reference no.: PA 01519/18
Project Title: Upgrading works to open rehabilitated landfill to the public
Location: Site at, Il-Qortin Ta' Ghajn Damma, Xaghra, Gozo
Screening date: August 2018

1. Description of Proposal

1.1 Outline of project/development

The proposal involves the upgrading of the Qortin rehabilitated landfill, l/o Xaghra, Gozo, in order to be safe and suitable to be opened up for the public.

The project involves:

1. Construction of security gates for the entrances/exits;
2. General cleaning of the site;
3. Railing;
4. Enclosure to manifolds and gas wells;
5. Signage;
6. Construction of a dog park;
7. Filling up of weighbridge pit and removal of ramp;
8. Installation of recycling rubbish bins;
9. Placing of outdoor furniture, including canopy structure;
10. Construction of the carpark as approved in PA 1505/12;
11. Construction of a series of bollards around the booster and combustion plant, and replacing the existing fence around the RTO plant with a new one.

1.2 Site description and related considerations

The rehabilitated landfill is located in the limits of Xaghra. Il-Qortin, Gozo has been in operation as a landfill since 1968. It is located approximately 2 kilometres north of Xaghra, and 1 kilometre to the east of Marsalforn on the north coast of the island of Gozo.

The site was developed on the high level garigue limestone plateau of il-Qortin ta' Ghajn Damma and areas of garigue remain on the plateau to the west. A small private dwelling has been built on the highest point of the plateau immediately to the west of the landfill. The limestone plateau to the south and east consists of rubble walled fields. Although the fields immediately adjacent to the landfill are disused, the remainder are currently in agricultural use.

The limestone plateau terminates to the north and west with a cliff face around 10-15 m high below which are steep Rdum clay slopes descending to the sea at Marsalforn and the coastline to the east where limestone again outcrops at sea level.

The current landfill footprint occupies an area of around 3.5 hectares. The area subject to this application, consisting mainly of the footpaths, has an area of 17,025m².

1.3 Site history

The Qortin dump was in operation as uncontrolled landfill until 2004. The landfill has been transformed and regenerated following a development permit issued by the then MEPA in 2011 through PA 00219/09.

Rehabilitation and restoration of the site was achieved through the installation of an engineered capping, the control of gas emissions, the planting of indigenous landscape species and through ongoing maintenance and irrigation.

Another planning application, PA 1505/12 was subsequently submitted for a proposed photovoltaic field, proposed reservoir and rubble walls. The permit for this application was issued by the then MEPA in July 2013. However, a strategic decision was taken not to proceed with the photovoltaic field but to construct the reservoir only. The latter was to render the rehabilitated Qortin landfill more self-sufficient by collecting rainwater falling on the landfill and reusing it to irrigate the landscaping within the site.

A Health and Safety study was carried out identifying measures to be carried out to make Qortin safe for public use. A new application (i.e this application) was submitted to the Planning Authority to open up the Qortin landfill to the public, subject to upgrading works required to make the site suitable and safe for public use (Clause 7 in permit PA 00219/09).

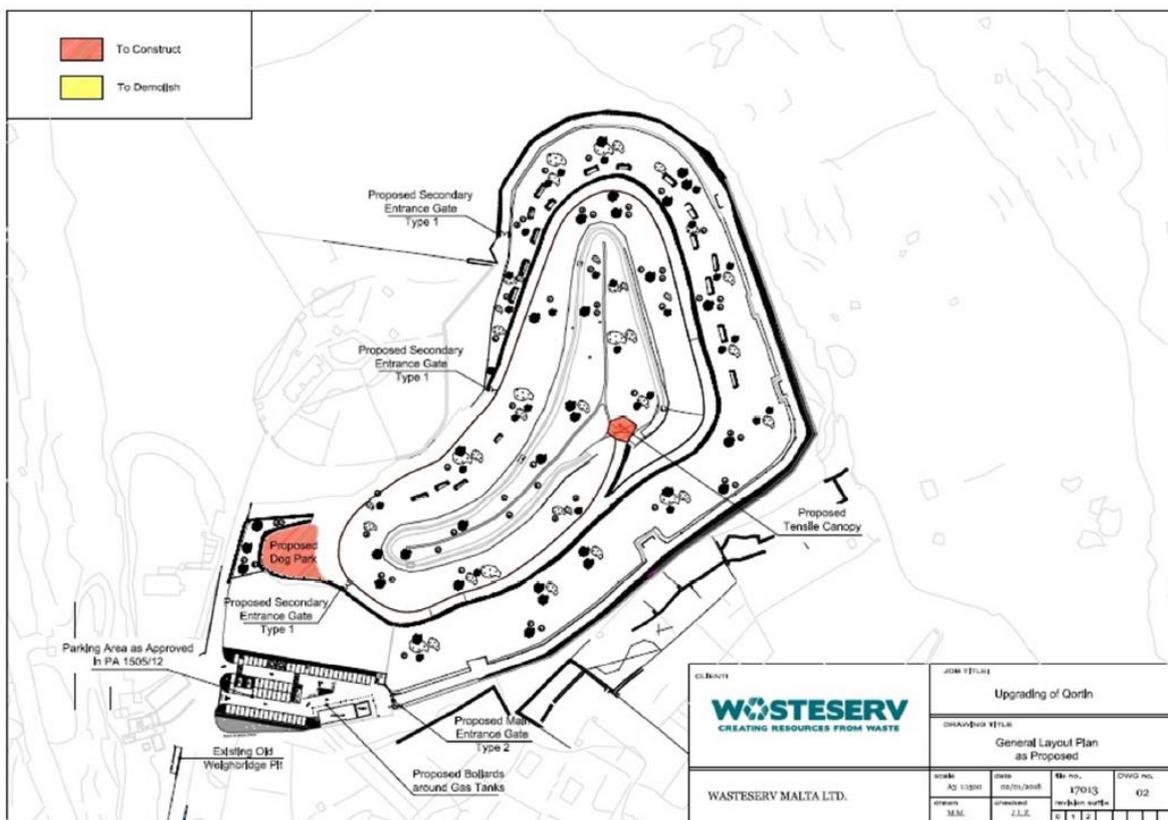


Figure 1: Proposed General Layout (Source: PDS)

2. Screening criteria

2.1 Relevant EIA/screening criteria: (citations refer to EIA Regulations, 2017 (S.L 549.46), except where otherwise specified):

- i. The proposed development qualifies for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under Schedule I Category II as per Section 1.0.2.1 (Development with a site area of 2ha or more).

2.2 AA screening

The proposal was screened in terms of Regulation 19(1) of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, 2006 (S.L. 549.44), given that the site lies in the immediate vicinity to the Natura 2000 site (MT 0000001) Ghajn Barrani – Special Area of Conservation as designated by the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Regulations of 2006 (S.L. 549.44).

3. Documents used for screening:

1. Project Description Statement (dated June 2018)
2. ATEX Fire & Explosion Risk Assessment and Hazardous Area Classification report
3. The 2nd Water Catchment Management Plan for the Malta Water Catchment District 2015-2021

4. Screening Matrix Checklist

The following screening checklist is based on information in the Project Description Statement provided by the developer in accordance with Schedule II of the EIA Regulations (S.L. 546.49) and the European Commission Guidance on Screening (2017).

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
1	Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works of the Project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, landuse, changes in water bodies, etc)?	The project will involve the works mentioned in Section 1.1 above.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	PDS pgs. 6 and 7
2	Will construction or operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/

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	are non-renewable or in short supply?			
3	Will the Project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health to the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	A gas collection system was installed (as approved through PA 00219/09), to collect landfill gas. Impacts from landfill gas include odours and health effects from landfill gas due to the breakdown of waste material.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Although the smell produced from some of the gases released can be detected by humans, the amounts released are below those that would cause health effects. No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	PDS pgs. 27
4	Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction, operation or decommissioning?	Any waste generated from the proposed development is typically generated in public parks.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No particular impacts from a waste perspective are envisaged. This is subject to mitigation and/or safety measures identified in the PDS.	PDS
5	Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air or lead to exceeding Ambient Air Quality standards in Directives 2008/50/EC and 2004/107/EC?	The Qortin landfill has been transformed and regenerated following a development permit issued by MEPA in 2011 under PA 00219/09. Rehabilitation and restoration of the site was achieved through the installation of an engineered capping, the control of gas emissions, the planting of indigenous landscape species and through the ongoing maintenance and irrigation. This planning application is seeking to upgrade to site in order to be opened to the public.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged given the nature of the proposal.	PDS pgs. 4
6	Will the Project cause noise and	Once operational, an increase in traffic shall be	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/>	/

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	vibration or the releasing of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation	envisaged, especially during weekends, which can be of nuisance.	The forecasted increase in traffic flow is not expected to be significant. No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	
7	Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	The project lies relatively close to the coastal water body MTC 102 and circa 230m away from a Special Protection Area (MT 0000112) - Il-Bahar ta' madwar Ghawdex.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> In the 2 nd Water Catchment Management Plan for the Malta Water Catchment District 2015-2021, it is stated that Qortin landfill (amongst others including Magħtab and Wed Fulija) could be a source of contaminants through leaching in adjacent coastal water bodies, however Scott Wilson Report (2004) concluded that overall these landfills did not pose a significant risk of contamination to the landfills' nearby water environment. No significant impacts are envisaged by the proposed works, additionally, the approved rehabilitation will minimise any potential impacts once the landfill is capped. Mitigation measures should be implemented to ensure any potential risks.	WC MP Pg. 80
8	Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project which could affect human health or the environment?	The ATEX Fire & Explosion Risk Assessment and Hazardous Area Classification report identifies potential scenarios under which an explosion hazard may occur.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> A failure in the leachate system is a problem as leachate contains many toxic substances; however it is unlikely that it will generate a substantial explosion risk. I Suspected failures or inefficiencies in the leachate drainage system should be investigated and rectified. In addition, the latter together with a maintenance program, will lower the risk of such leakages from occurring. Safeguards and risk mitigation measures will be implemented within the system, thus limiting the probability of an incident occurring.	ATEX Assessment

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9	Will the Project result in environmentally related social changes for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
10	Are there any such factors which should be considered such as the consequential development which could lead to environmental impacts or the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
11	Is the project located within or close to any areas which are protected under international, EU or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the Project?	<p>The project's boundary is located in the immediate vicinity to the Natura 2000 site (MT 0000001) Għajn Barrani – Special Area of Conservation. This was designated as such as it supports Annex I Habitats, Annex II plant species and animal species, and Red Data Book listed species.</p> <p>The site also lies in the immediate vicinity to the Għajn Barrani (l/o Xagħra) Tree Protection Area (G.N 473 of 2011).</p> <p>Part of the project lies within the boundaries of the Għajn Barrani u il-Qortin ta' Għajn Damma (MALT_171) - Area of Ecological Importance/Site of Scientific Importance.</p> <p>The site also lies circa 230m away from a Special</p>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Although the site lies in the vicinity to the areas mentioned in the previous column, the nature of the development is such that it is not likely to have a significant environmental impact on these protected areas.	/

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		Protection Area (MT 0000112) - Il-Baħar ta' madwar Ghawdex.		
12	Are there any areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g. marshlands, wetlands, watercourses or other water bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to Questions 7 and 11 refer.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to Questions 7 and 11 refer.	/
13	Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over wintering, migration, which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to Questions 7 and 11 refer.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to Questions 7 and 11 refer.	/
14	Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters (or features of the marine environment on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	Reply to Questions 7 and 11 refer.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to Questions 7 and 11 refer.	/

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15	Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be effected by the Project?	The site is surrounded by the Ghajn Barrani area, which is designated as an Area of High Landscape Value as per G.N 369 of 2008.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged given the nature of the proposal.	/
16	Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the Project?	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
17	Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the Project?	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
18	Is the Project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	The site is situated on a high level garigue limestone plateau of il-Qortin ta' Ghajn Damma, thus is visible from a wide area that extends from the ridge top towns of Xaghra and Nadur to the south east, to Rabat to the south and the ridge top village of Żebbuġ to the west. Key visual receptors include residents and tourists based in Marsalforn (directly below the site), visitors walking the trails of northern Gozo or motorists passing through the area, local residents of those properties that adjoin the site and its access, ferry passengers and passing seafarers and aircraft passengers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged given the nature of the proposal.	PDS pg 7

Question Number:	Questions to be Considered	Types and characteristics of identified potential impacts Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Briefly justify	Document Reference
19	Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	The area surrounding the former Qortin landfill includes a number of cultural features such as the scanty remains of two coastal towers on Il-Qortin ta' Ghajn Damma plateau (one at the cliff edge, the other under the landfill itself), a number of pre-historic coralline megaliths to the west of the site – these are the remains of a larger structure situated on the hilltop of il-Qortin ta' Ghajn Damma, a pre-historic rock-cut tomb to the east of the site, sitting on the flat area at the foot of the southeastern slope of il-Qortin ta' Ghajn Damma, and further coralline megaliths, the remains of a larger structure, to the east of the site.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> As long as basic precautions are taken to prevent accidental damages (as may otherwise arise through careless mechanised interventions), the proposed development is not envisaged to impact on any surviving/discovered cultural features. The proposal is expected to improve the current visual amenity on the immediate landscape context of such sites as the site is progressively restored.	/
20	Is the Project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield/ODZ land?	The Qortin dump was in operation as uncontrolled landfill until 2004. The landfill is being rehabilitated following a development permit issued by MEPA in 2011 under PA 00219/09. Thus, this proposal, together with the approved PA 00219/09 will rehabilitate and upgrade the site.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> A positive effect is envisaged in this respect since the proposal will result in a more visually attractive and stable area. Additionally, the site will be opened to the public.	PDS pg 9
21	Are there existing land uses on or around the location e.g. homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying which	Yes. One finds a few scattered properties which adjoin the site and its access. Furthermore, the former Qortin landfill is 1km to the east of Marsalforn: a tourist area and is also 2km north of one of the most extensive villages in Gozo: Xaghra. To the east of Qortin lies Ir-Ramla l-Hamra an important public beach in Gozo.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged given the nature of the proposed development.	/

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	could be affected by the project?			
22	Are there any plans for future land uses within or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
23	Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, that could be affected by the project?	Reply to question 21 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to question 21 refers.	/
24	Are there any areas on or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities which could be affected by the project?	None that are known of.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged.	/
25	Are there any areas within or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the project?	Reply to question 13 refers.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Reply to question 13 refers.	/
26	Are there any areas within or around the location which are already	The location itself is an area that has already been subject to significant pollution due to dumping of inert and non-	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> Through PA 00219/09 the site is being rehabilitated, and together with this proposal, the site will be upgraded and opened to the	/

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	subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded that could be affected by the project?	inert waste in an uncontrolled fashion. PA 00219/09 has been approved for the rehabilitation of the landfill and is currently being capped.	public. No significant effects are expected.	
27	Is the project location susceptible to earthquakes, or subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	The landfill will be stabilised and capped through PA 00219/09.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unclear <input type="checkbox"/> No significant environmental impacts are envisaged given the nature of the project.	/

4. Screening Conclusion and recommended way forward

4.1 EIA screening conclusion

The above detailed EIA screening concludes that impacts of the development are unlikely to be significant to the point of warranting an EIA, as long as various mitigation measures are duly incorporated through the mainstream development consent mechanism and mitigated by means of conditions and specifications (e.g. approved documents) in the development permit.

In this regard, the proposal does not require the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment in line with the EIA Regulations (S.L.549.46).

4.2 AA Screening conclusion

With regards to the Appropriate Assessment, the project's boundary is located in the immediate vicinity to the Natura 2000 site (MT 0000001) Ghajn Barrani – Special Area of Conservation; and in close proximity to Il-Baħar ta' madwar Ghawdex (MT 0000112) designated as a Special Protection Area. To this effect, it has been assessed in terms of Regulation 19(1) of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Regulations, 2006 (S.L. 549.44).

The above detailed screening has determined that no significant environmental impact on the integrity of the habitats, species and the Natura 2000 sites as a whole, are envisaged; provided that good practice mitigation measures during site preparation and no overspill effects, amongst others are duly

applied as identified in this screening document. In this regard, no further assessment in terms of Regulation 19 of S.L. 549.44 is considered relevant.

4.3 Screening disclaimer

The above screening results, the ensuing conclusions and recommendations are without prejudice to any required changes or updates should the development proposal be eventually modified or should the information/assumptions provided turn out to be incorrect. Any deviations of the proposal from this submission, or failure to honour any conditions tied to the screening conclusion, would need to be re-assessed and the merits of this screening would need to be re-opened.