

PA 05484/03
CREATION OF STABILISED SLOPES AND CAR PARKING
AT IR-RABA TA' WARA S-SUR, IT-TELGHĀ TAL-BELT, RABAT (GHAWDEX)

1. INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) requested an Environmental Planning Statement (EPS) for the full development application PA 05484/03, for the creation of stabilised slopes and car parking, at Ir-Raba ta' Wara s-Sur, It-Telgħa tal-Belt, Rabat, Gozo. The application required the submission of an Environmental Planning Statement (EPS) in accordance with Article 3(7) of the former Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2001 (Legal Notice 204 of 2001). The EPS was coordinated by Ing. Mario Schembri on behalf of AIS Environmental Consultants Ltd.

The proposed site occupies 6,000m² and lies to the west and outside of the Ċittadella, while being surrounded by the Ċittadella to the west, terraced fields to the north and the road leading to the Ċittadella (It-Telgħa tal-Belt) to its south and properties abutting Triq l-Imgħallem to the east. The existing land use consists of three terraced levels. The site lies outside the development zone and is designated as a Special Area of Conservation and an Area of High Landscape Value.

The EPS states that the proposed project presents an opportunity to enhance accessibility to the Ċittadella by providing parking spaces and concurrently strengthening the bastions by creating stabilised slopes. Erosion, mainly due to water percolation and exposure to the elements, has gradually caused the slopes to become unstable which is creating a potential risk to public safety. The project also proposes measures to address accessibility and car parking requirements, in an area which is becoming increasingly problematic in this respect, both during the week and on weekends. The original plans are presented in Figure 2.1 and 2.2 of the EPS Coordinated Assessment.

2012 Amended Plans

In reaction to the issues raised during the EIA process, the applicant provided a revised proposal in July 2012, in order to address issues raised by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority and the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The proposal was redesigned to a smaller car parking area with less parking spaces thus resulting in a reduction in both the total footprint and in the profile of the development, and the submission states that:

- The 2012 proposal consists of 84 parking spaces, split over two levels, whereas the first drawings submitted in 2004 consisted of a 113-space parking spread over three parking levels with a small belvedere at the lower edge of the projects;
- The total footprint of the parking has been reduced from 2940m² to 2760m²; and
- The profile of the development has also been reduced so that the new construction will better merge into the existing natural contours of the hillside.

In this regard, an addendum to the EPS was submitted so as to update the findings of the EPS such that it reflects the latest version of the proposed development. Figures 1 to 4 in the Addendum to the EPS Coordinated Assessment illustrate the revisions to the proposal.

Chapter 3.0 of the EPS Coordinated assessment provides an overview of the planning policies and legislative framework which relate to this project.

2. EIA CONSULTATIONS

2.1 EIA Scoping

As part of the EPS process, consultation with various consultees was carried out during the scoping stage. Entities consulted included:

- Rabat (Gozo) Local Council;
- Malta Resources Authority (MRA);
- Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH);
- Nature Group (environmental NGOs);
- Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (MRRA);
- Din I-Art Ħelwa (DLĦ);
- Kummissjoni Ambjent; and,
- Ministry for Gozo

The Project Description Statement (PDS) associated with the proposed development was also circulated for internal review within MEPA and was available for public inspection.

The consultation period spanned from 19th February to 20th March 2007. Comments received within the stipulated timeframes are as follows: Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (email dated 9th March 2007), Nature Trust Malta (email dated 14th March 2007), the Ministry for Gozo (letter dated 10th March 2007) and Din I-Art Ħelwa (letter dated 13th March 2007). A collation of these comments is included in Appendix 1 to this report.

2.2 EIA Review

As part of the EIA process following the submission of the EPS, consultation with various consultees was carried out during the review stage. Entities consulted included:

- Rabat (Gozo) Local Council;
- Malta Resources Authority (MRA);
- Environmental Health Directorate;
- Malta Tourism Authority (MTA);
- Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH);
- Nature Group (environmental NGOs) including Din I-Art Ħelwa; and
- Transport Malta.

The EPS was also circulated for internal review within MEPA.

The consultation period spanned from 5th December 2011 to 11th January 2012. Comments were received from the Environmental Health Directorate (email dated 5th January 2012). Other comments were received from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) following the deadline for submissions.

Comments made by MEPA and its consultees during the review stage were forwarded to the EIA Coordinator, the developer and the architect on 23rd January 2012. These comments were addressed by the EIA Coordinator and responses were submitted to MEPA, all of which are included in an Addendum to the EPS Coordinated Assessment Report. Comments received during the consultation period are included in Appendix 2 to this Report.

2.3 EIA Certification

The EPS was certified on the 11th September 2012 and was published for a three-week public consultation period, with a deadline for submissions being the 18th October 2012. No comments were received from the public.

3. EIA FINDINGS

The characteristics of the site, assessment of impacts and mitigation measures were identified in the EPS, as follows:

3.1 Land Use

The EPS indicates that the proposed area lies in the semi-urban landscape to the west of the Ćittadella, below the fortification walls. The areas lying immediately adjacent to the Ćittadella consist mostly of terraced slopes of cultivated and abandoned agricultural land with some residential buildings extending away from the Rabat village core. Figure 4.1 in the EPS Coordinated Assessment illustrates the main land uses associated with the site and its surroundings as follows:

- Access through roads and the panoramic routes around the Ćittadella;
- Agricultural land;
- Residential area;
- Fortifications (with particular reference to the moat around the Ćittadella);
- Parking (namely off-road parking in the area of the proposed carpark);
- Places of worship (churches and chapels); and
- Semi-natural land.

IMPACTS ON LAND USE

The EPS identified the following impacts arising from the development of the proposal (significance criteria are detailed in Table 4.1 of the EPS Coordinated Assessment):

- Access to site restricted during construction phase – *Minor adverse significance*;
- Increase in traffic in the area during the construction phase – *Moderate adverse significance*;
- Loss of land in an area located Outside Development Zone – *Major adverse significance*;
- Change in land use from natural vegetation to car-park – *Minor significance*;
- Increase in number of parking spaces on completion of the proposed development – *Moderate to major beneficial significance*;
- Increase in traffic during operation as a result of the increase in parking spaces – *Moderate adverse significance*; and
- Impact on public amenities located within the Ćittadella – *Major beneficial significance*.

In view of the 2012 revisions, the EPS Addendum indicates that the total footprint of the proposed development remains unchanged, whilst the car park area has been reduced from 2940m² to 2760m². Consequently, the negative impacts on land use are somewhat reduced but the overall conclusions of the original assessment on this front remain valid.

PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

- The EPS states that proper construction management practices shall improve efficiency in the construction phase, and thus the restricted access to the site would be reduced accordingly.

- Traffic management during both the construction and the operational phases would minimise impacts associated with vehicular access.
- An appropriate landscaping scheme would minimize the change in land use from natural vegetation to a car park, which may also mitigate some of the related visual impact.

RESIDUAL IMPACTS

The EPS states that the loss of an area of land located Outside Development Zone and its change from an area of natural vegetation, albeit significantly disturbed, to a carpark cannot be adequately mitigated and will thus result in a residual adverse impact of *major significance*. Residual impacts associated with the increase in traffic during construction and operational phases have also been identified to be of moderate significance, subject to the implementation of effective traffic management measures.

Environment Protection Directorate Note (1): The Environment Protection Directorate has significant concerns with respect to the permanent land take-up associated with the car-park, particularly due to the close proximity to the Ċittadella. The same concerns also apply to the latest (2012) version of the proposal. Furthermore, the Directorate does not agree that the change in land use from natural vegetation to car-park is of minor significance when taking into account the true baseline.

3.2 Landscape and Visual Assessment

Within a planning and policy context according to MEPA's Draft Landscape Assessment Study (2004), the proposed site falls under the 'Żebbuġ Circular Mesas Area' which is an area mostly dominated by agricultural land, other than the tops of the undeveloped mesas. The most important mesa is considered to be the Ċittadella Hill. Furthermore, the Ċittadella and its environs are classified as an Area of Very High Landscape Sensitivity (AVHLS), which are considered to be the most sensitive areas in the Maltese Islands, with interventions having to be guided with utmost attention. Accordingly, it also determines that long-distance views should be strictly safeguarded. Additionally, the Gozo and Comino Local Plan indicates the area around the Ċittadella as a Visual Integrity Buffer Zone, and an Area of High Landscape Value.

The EPS states that with respect to natural characteristics, the site comprises a sloping, naturally terraced system, as follows:

- To the East, the land rises sharply, and the summit of the mesa is dominated by the Ċittadella itself;
- To the West/North West, the view is dominated by the nearby hill of Gelmus and the hill of Ta' Għammar in the background. The landscape towards the foot of the hill has been marred to some extent by a number of residential developments;
- To the North, the view is characterised by long distance views, as far as Ta' Ġurdan, encompassing a number of different villages; and
- The town of Rabat lies to the south of the proposed site.

Visual Amenity

The Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) considered in this assessment, as per Drawing 5.1 in the EPS Coordinated Assessment, takes into consideration the following:

- The nearby hill of Gelmus which is a primary feature in the viewshed; and
- The area of Tal-Ħofra and the area of Tal-Mejda; both considered to be sensitive receptors due to their vicinity to the site and the unspoilt views enjoyed between them.

Eight principal viewpoints (1-8) were selected as follows: (Drawing 5.2 of the EPS Coordinated Assessment, with the photomontages included in Drawings 5.3 to 5.18) to assess the visual impact of the

proposed development. Criteria of significance have been determined through sensitivity of the viewpoint and the magnitude of impact as follows:

- Viewpoint 1: View from Gelmus hill – *Major significance*;
- Viewpoint 2: View from the valley between Gelmus hill and the Ċittadella – *Minor to moderate significance*;
- Viewpoint 3: View from Triq l-Imgħallem – *Minor to moderate significance*;
- Viewpoint 4: View from the lower North side of Ta' Wara s-Sur – *Insignificant*;
- Viewpoint 5: View from Triq Ta' Wara s-Sur – *Minor significance*;
- Viewpoint 6: View from the bastions above the site – *Major significance*;
- Viewpoint 7: View from the upper part of It-Telgħa tal-Belt – *Minor significance*; and,
- Viewpoint 8: View from Triq Sant'Orsla, directly below Gelmus hill – *Minor to moderate significance*.

IMPACTS ON LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL AMENITY

The EPS indicates that during the construction phase (including site clearance and site clearing), the proposed development is expected to present a considerable change to the topography of the area, and consequently a direct adverse change to the landscape of *moderate to major significance*. During the operational phase, permanent change in the landscape of the immediate site and its surroundings, is considered to be an impact of *major significance*.

With respect to visual amenity, the impact of the proposed development on the visual amenity of the areas portrayed in the photomontages from the agreed viewpoints ranges from *insignificant to major adverse significance*, particularly with respect to the medium-distance view from Gelmus hill, given the change to be brought about by the development and the short-distance view from the bastions above the site.

In the light of the revisions to the proposal, the EPS Addendum states that the changes which have implications on the landscape, topography and visual amenity include the reduction of the car park area, its better merging into the existing natural contours, and the replacement of the high masonry terracing walls with lower earth bunds which will be predisposed for vegetation growth and the planting of trees. The EPS states that the growth of natural vegetation on the consolidated earth slopes and landscaping with trees compatible with the surroundings shall lead to a reduction in the visual impact significance of 'loss of natural vegetation' from major negative to moderate negative. However, it also indicates that despite the decrease in the negative visual impact, this cannot be completely mitigated particularly since the development will still be prominent due to the open nature of the site, its elevation and its context. Thus, in this regard, the EPS concludes that the other impacts on the landscape, topography and visual amenity as assessed in the EPS Coordinated assessment do not change. A revised photomontage of the view from Gelmus hill can be found in Figure 13 and 14 of the EPS Coordinated Assessment Addendum.

PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

The EPS indicates that:

- During site clearance and construction, adequate screening around the development site should be provided in order to significantly reduce impacts during this phase of the development.
- During operation, an extensive landscaping scheme should be implemented to reduce impacts as much as possible.

RESIDUAL IMPACTS

The EPS states that since the proposal shall be situated in a sensitive landscape area, and since it is expected to bring about a considerable change in the landscape (which is permanent and irreversible), a major residual impact is expected, notwithstanding the implementation of an extensive landscaping scheme.

Environment Protection Directorate Note (2): The Environment Protection Directorate agrees with the consultants' conclusion associated with the visual impacts of the proposal and considers that the development shall have a significant adverse impact, particularly with respect to medium and long-distance views towards the site. Furthermore, the development of the car park runs counter to Measure 2.4.22 of the National Environment Policy (*Control development in historic sites and areas through planning permissions*), considering the significant visual impacts on the cultural landscape.

3.3 Geology, Palaeontology, Hydrogeology and Hydrology

The study was based on a geo-technical desk-study, a number of walk-over surveys and a geotechnical investigation.

Surface geology and hydrology

The EPS states that the site is likely to be underlain by a layer of Blue Clay, below which the sequence of Upper, Middle and Lower Globigerina Limestone would probably be found at considerable depth. The rock on which the Ċittadella is built is shown as the Għajn Melel member of the Upper Globigerina Limestone formation. The Greensand Formation is also likely to be found beneath the Ċittadella. There is also a fault line to the south of the site having a strike running approximately North East to South West at Wied il-Lunzjata. Furthermore, the desk-study also indicated that the whole plateau on which the Ċittadella is built forms the outline of an infilled solution subsidence structure broadly similar to the ones found in Western Gozo, most notably in the area around Dwejra.

The EPS also states that evidence indicates that the Ċittadella is underlain by a thick layer of Blue Clay which is known to have a very low permeability to groundwater as a result of its minute particle size and thus it is most likely that a perched water table is present below the Ċittadella; this was confirmed by the Water Services Corporation. Moreover, the water level within the clay slope (or the phreatic surface) may experience seasonal variations.

Aerial photography of the Ċittadella and its immediate environs has indicated that there were two landslides on the east flank of the nearby hill at Gelmus (Figure 6.7 in the EPS Coordinated Assessment refers). There is no clear evidence of landslides on the west-facing slopes of the Ċittadella. However, the area has been extensively reshaped by man and any traces of old landslides like the ones visible on the Gelmus aerial photograph would have been obliterated under the existing terraced fields. However, the EPS indicates that this does not exclude the possibility that old slip-surfaces may still exist below the slopes, and that such slip-surfaces could be re-activated under the conditions of pore water pressure, an increase of the overburden at the crest of the slope or because of undercutting at the toe.

The study also included a walk-over survey of the following areas (as per Section 6.3.4 of the EPS Coordinated Assessment):

- A survey along the walls and buildings of the Ċittadella;
- A near-field survey at the base of the walls of the Ċittadella;
- A survey of the underground shelters and passageways beneath St. Martin's Demi-Bastion and below the area of the main gate; and
- A far-field survey from Gelmus hill.

Geotechnical analysis

The geotechnical study analysed the project in three main ways:

- A qualitative analysis of the project, which included a study of the terrain and any impacts to be brought about by works both during construction and operation (i.e. excavation and fill, car park retaining walls, car park paving and landscaping).
- A simplified ground model for the Cittàdella, that takes into consideration the boundary conditions and the water levels in both the soil and the clay located on site.
- The numerical model (whereby two different models were analysed representing the two extremes of stratification existing at the site of the proposed car-park)

Following the detailed analysis in the EPS, it was concluded that the addition of the carpark loads was seen to have very little effect on the overall stability of the slope, particularly since this type of construction is considered to be too small in comparison with the slope mechanism for these to have any effect. Thus, the car park as originally proposed will have no effect on the stability of the historic structures forming the Cittàdella. In addition, the geotechnical analysis determined the factors of safety at the different stages of the development, indicating that the significant factor in terms of stability is the water level within the slope, thus highlighting the importance of monitoring the pore pressures in the slopes and the importance of ensuring that any interventions to the clay slopes do not alter the water levels within the clay stratum.

In this regard, having established that overall stability of the hillside and of the Cittàdella is not critical, the main concerns when considering the car park construction are the following:

- (1) *Consolidation/settlement of the underlying clay* – the study indicates that the retaining structure should be able to accommodate movement without compromising its visual appearance and it should also have a configuration which will prevent intense concentrated loads being created at its base. A generous base area can help to achieve this;
- (2) *Permeability of the retaining structures* – The proposed structures should prevent the build-up of pore pressure within the newly constructed backfill and within the underlying existing fill;
- (3) *The permeability of the backfill material;*
- (4) *Drainage of the car park surfaces;* and
- (5) *Basic design proposals.*

Thus, the EPS determines that the following information would need to be considered in detail in the design of the proposal:

- The actual site levels and the proposed car park levels such that the actual amount of backfilling/excavation works within the different areas, as this would determine the actual height of the retaining structures;
- The actual depth of the existing fill material overlying the Blue Clay;
- The depth to the water table and the depth of the saturated zone; and
- The undrained strength of the clay close to the surface. This would need to be assessed more carefully once the clay is exposed to build the foundations of the structure.

IMPACTS ON GEOLOGY, PALAEOLOGY, HYDROGEOLOGY AND HYDROLOGY

The EPS identified the following impacts arising from the development of the proposal (significance criteria are detailed in Table 6.2 of the EPS Coordinated Assessment):

- Surface levelling and shallow excavations to attain required carpark levels during construction – *Major significance;*
- Building of retaining structures and backfilling – *Insignificant;*
- Rainwater runoff, unless carefully managed, can cause changes in moisture content of the clay or erosion and mudflows if concentrated at a point – *Major adverse significance;*
- Storm water – *Major significance;*
- Landscaping of the proposed carpark with root systems drawing up water and changing water balance within the clay – *Major significance;*
- Any changes in the level of the water table within the clay – *Major significance.*

Following the latest amendments to the proposal, the EPS Addendum states that the changes in the proposed development that have implications on geology, palaeontology, hydrogeology and hydrology include the elimination of bedrock cutting and the replacement of the high masonry terracing walls with lower earth bunds, which allow quicker drainage of stormwater from behind the retaining structures. However, the EPS concludes that notwithstanding these design improvements, the conclusions of the previous detailed assessment do not change.

PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

- Surface levelling to be carried out over the shortest possible period, ideally avoiding the wetter months and the hot summer months;
- The extent of fill and excavation is not to exceed that proposed on the project drawings submitted with the EPS;
- Permeable pavement materials are to be used to allow same infiltration rates into clay below;
- Surface runoff not to be concentrated at one point but spread over entire site perimeter;
- Efficient and quick drainage of stormwater from behind the retaining structures;
- Choice of landscaping to avoid large evapotranspiration rates;
- All design decisions should be made keeping this in mind. Any interventions that will drastically change the level of the water table will have an adverse impact.

RESIDUAL IMPACTS

The above mitigation measures should mitigate most of the impacts identified, and with these systems in place, the residual impact of major significance would be the risk related to storm water build-up, should there be any lack of proper maintenance of the drainage system.

3.4 Cultural Heritage

The cultural heritage study involved a detailed site survey of the area of influence to determine the surface visible cultural features and desktop research, which resulted in the recording of a number of cultural features, which mainly consist of features within Ćittadella and its promontory and the urban historical core of Rabat. The area of influence can be seen in Drawing 7.1 of the EPS Coordinated Assessment, and Table 7.1 provides an exhaustive list of the scheduled sites within the Ćittadella.

IMPACTS ON CULTURAL HERITAGE

The EPS states that the impacts of the proposed development do not concern only the area directly affected by the development but also the surrounding area which constitutes the cultural landscape of the Ćittadella, being a Level 1 scheduled area. The impacts have been subdivided into those for the construction phase and those concerned with the operational phase, as follows:

Construction Phase

The EPS indicates that the large amount of heavy vehicles during the construction phase may threaten the structural integrity of the bastions due to the vicinity of the proposed development to the Ćittadella fortifications and is thus considered to be of *major significance*. It may also damage the scheduled steps of It-Telġha tal-Belt, and increase heavy vehicular traffic in the area of It-Tokk and Pjazza Savina Square. It should also be noted that the area in question has already been disturbed through the demolition of rubble walls and the clearance of vegetation to create a temporary car park, and thus the aesthetic and cultural fabric of the Ćittadella has already been significantly impacted.

Operational Phase

The EPS states that the project will destroy part of the natural terracing which is retained by well-preserved rubble walls, thus altering what is until now an undeveloped area. In spite of the fact that no cultural features were identified in the proposed area of development during the site survey, the presence of other archaeological sites in its immediate vicinity (namely Bronze Age silos at It-Telgħa tal-Belt, the remains of medieval fortifications in the ravelin in front of the Ċittadella, and the remains at Triq l-Imgħallem), suggest a likely existence additional buried remains which may be impacted by the development and lead to their eventual loss. With respect to the cultural landscape, the building of the car park is expected to lead to another scar in the cultural landscape as a *major significant impact*.

The EPS Addendum indicates that the changes which have implications on features of cultural heritage include the elimination of bedrock cutting, the keeping of foundation construction to a minimum depth within modern debris layers, a design in line with the existing natural contours and a landscaping scheme compatible with the surrounding rural context. However, it also states that despite the above-mentioned improvements to the proposal, the possibility of uncovering archaeological remains still remains a possibility and constant monitoring for all excavation and levelling works by a qualified archaeologist approved by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage is required. Should any archaeological remains be identified in the course of the works these would need to be protected in line with existing legislation and documented as necessary and as requested by the SCH. The requirement of archaeological monitoring during the works was already identified in the EPS.

No direct or indirect impacts are envisaged with respect to any possible underground tunnels present under the development site. As confirmed from the bore-logs in the EPS, the depth of the current debris is sufficient to allow levelling of the two parking levels without requiring any rock-cutting.

Thus, although the changes in design and the landscaping scheme lead to a reduction in the negative visual impacts, the impacts on the cultural landscape do not change substantially. Thus, despite the changes carried out to the proposal, the overall conclusions of the cultural heritage assessment of the EPS still stand.

PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

- Rubble walls should be rebuilt using the traditional dry stone technique and reutilising the stones from dismantled walls.
- A study of the structural integrity of the fortifications should be carried out prior to the commencement of works to make sure that no damage will be incurred by the presence of heavy vehicles and by the works themselves on the Ċittadella fortifications.
- Given that during the construction phase heavy machinery will need access to the area, an access route and a parking area should be earmarked to be solely used by these heavy vehicles. The steps of It-Telgħa tal-Belt should be covered during the construction phase to make sure that no damage is incurred.
- Given the archaeological sensitivity of the area, trial trenches should be excavated under the direction of Superintendence of Cultural Heritage to determine the presence and nature of any buried cultural remains.
- All works should be carried out in the presence of qualified archaeologists approved by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage to make sure that no buried cultural features are damaged or destroyed during works.

RESIDUAL IMPACTS

The EPS states that the following residual impacts will remain:

- The visual integrity and historical fabric of the features within the Ċittadella as well as that of the Ċittadella as a whole unit will still be threatened, given that a parking area bounded with rubble walls and shrouded by indigenous trees will still alter the present aesthetics of the site.

- The cultural landscape of the area will be changed irreversibly.

Environment Protection Directorate Note (3): The EPD agrees with the conclusions of the Environmental Planning Statement and has serious concerns on the impact on the cultural landscape of the Ċittadella. The presence of the illegal ‘temporary’ car park does not justify the need of a new car park in the area and, despite improvements in the overall design of the proposal, the impact on the cultural landscape is still of major adverse significance. Furthermore, this runs counter to Measure 2.4.22 of the National Environment Policy, 2012 (*Control development in historic sites and areas through planning permissions*).

3.5 Ecology

The main aims of the study were the following:

- To establish the ecological importance of terrestrial habitats that will be affected by construction and operation;
- To assess the scale of impacts on the terrestrial ecosystems from the construction and operational phases of the proposed development;
- To identify mitigation measures and residual impacts, and
- To assess the need for ecological monitoring of the area.

Drawing 8.1 in the EPS Coordinated Assessment illustrates the area of influence of the ecological study carried out. The area of influence was further divided into a number of study areas, as follows:

- (i) The terraced slopes under the Ċittadella, which mainly include the area being proposed for development and the remaining areas to the west/northwest of the Ċittadella bastions;
- (ii) The fortified areas of the Ċittadella including the town centre, bastion walls, ruins, rubble walls and alleys; and
- (iii) The moat and fortifications extending along the south-eastern bastions of the Ċittadella.

Aspect (i) above is the most directly relevant to the site under consideration and is discussed further below.

Drawing 8.2 in the EPS indicates the ecological habitats at Iċ-Ċittadella. It should also be noted that the Ċittadella is designated as a Natura 2000 site (reference no. MT0000013) as per Govt. Notice 225 of 2003.

Environment Protection Directorate Note (4): During the course of processing, the EPD had also raised concerns vis-à-vis the additional lighting impacts from the proposed development on bat populations and had requested applicant to confirm whether the car park would lead to an increase in operational lighting over and above the baseline situation. Following this, the EIA Coordinator provided feedback indicating that the designed lighting lux levels will be subdued as required so as not to affect bat populations. Therefore, the lighting plans as submitted were considered to be acceptable from an Appropriate Assessment (AA) point of view and no further assessment was required. The AA screening conclusions are also relevant to the ecological component of the EIA.

The makeshift parking area currently found on the proposed site includes a disturbed habitat impacted mostly through earth-moving and off-road car-parking that has been practiced over the last years. These disturbed grounds are dominated by the crown daisy *Glebionis coronaria*, the boar thistle *Galactites tormentosa* and tree and cretan mallows *Lavatera arborea* and *Lavatera cretica*. Other common species include grasses such as *Avena* spp. and *Bromus* spp. and herbaceous legumes such as Sulla *Hedysarum coronarium* and milk vetch *Astragalus boeoticus*. Other patches of the parking areas still harbour the following remnants of the pre-existing ecosystem: *Ceratonia siliqua* (Carob tree), *Darniella melitensis* (Maltese salt tree), *Opuntia ficus-indica* (prickly pear), *Matthiola incana* and *Capparis orientalis* (caper).

The habitats located in the area of influence of the proposed development can be summarised as follows:

- Disturbed ground communities dominated by *Chrysanthemum coronarium*, *Lavatera* sp. and *Galactites tomentosa*;
- Steppic grassland dominated by *Melilotus messanensis* and *Ononis mitissima*;
- Cliff communities dominated by *Darniella melitensis*;
- Pseudo-maquis communities constituted by any or all of *Prunus dulcis*, *Ceratonia siliqua*, *Punica granatum*, *Ficus carica* and *Opuntia ficus-indica*;
- Agricultural land;
- Woodlots of *Cupressus* sp (cypress trees); and
- Woodlots of *Olea europea* (olive trees).

IMPACTS ON ECOLOGY

The EPS identifies the following impacts vis-à-vis ecology during the construction phase (as per significance criteria in Table 8.1 of the EPS):

- Loss of vegetation communities; ruderal communities, reed stand and abandoned agricultural land – *Minor significance*.
- Loss of mature carob trees and pseudo-maquis – *Minor significance*.
- Loss of rubble walls and associated established communities – *Minor significance*.
- Development of a carpark Outside Development Zone – *Major significance*.
- Generation of dust and silting of surface water – *Minor significance*.
- Leakage and emission of chemical pollutants from construction vehicles – *Minor significance*.

During the operational phase, the following impacts have been identified:

- Changes in site illumination – *Minor significance*.
- Leakage and emissions of chemical pollutants from parking vehicles – *Minor significance*.

In the light of the subsequent amendments to the proposed development, the EPS Addendum states that should the existing trees be integrated within the landscaping plan, the planting of additional trees will lead to a reduction in the negative impacts on ecology. Furthermore, the revised lighting scheme (refer to Section 3.7 of this report) will not result in an increase in operational lighting over and above the existing situation, while the amount of light on each level shall be kept to a bare minimum. This will also lead to a reduction in the negative impacts on any nocturnal species in the area. This would further limit the minor-significance impacts of the original proposal on ecology.

PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

- The EPS states that in order to mitigate habitat loss, the only possibility of minimising this impact is by reducing the footprint or redesigning the proposed development in order not to impinge on carob trees or integrating the carobs within the proposed landscaping scheme.
- A detailed landscaping scheme in accordance with the *Guidelines, on Trees, Shrubs and Plants for Planting and Landscaping in the Maltese Islands (2002)*, and should complement the habitats and rural landscape of the Ċittadella slopes.
- Appropriate border fencing to prevent further encroachment;
- Limiting of vehicle movement and storage areas within the construction site.
- Reinstatement of rubble walls, where possible.
- Good construction practices in accordance with Legal Notice 295 of 2007.
- Use of directional lighting, light screens, low-level lighting with photocell assistance.
- Regular cleaning and maintenance/installation of oil separators.

RESIDUAL IMPACTS

All of the impacts mentioned above are of minor significance following the appropriate mitigation, save for the impact associated with land (and habitat) take-up outside development zone which cannot be mitigated.

3.6 Noise and Vibration

An environmental noise and vibration survey was carried out to evaluate the effects, if any, resulting from construction works on the local environment. The assessment included site visits in order to identify relevant noise sensitive properties and following visits to take measurements of the current noise climate prevailing around the site. The noise locations used for the assessment can be seen in Drawing 9.1. The sensitive receptors identified included the following: residential area (1), a restaurant located in the Cittàdella (2), the Clock Tower in the Cittàdella (3), the Cathedral in the Cittàdella (4), a residential area located outside the Cittàdella entrance (5), a restaurant in the road parallel to the site (6), a residential area in the road parallel to the site (7) and a residential area in the road parallel to the site (8).

The maximum predicted levels are those related to the excavation phase, slope stabilisation and paving works, where LA_{eq} 67dB(A), with an increase of 6dB(A), at sensitive receptor 1.

Traffic-related noise

It is predicted that due to the predicted substantial increase in cars over the following 7 years, the noise levels will also increase by approximately 10dB; this increase of 10dB would cause noise to be perceived as double the loudness which could increase the likelihood of complaints due to traffic noise. In view of the fact that the predicted traffic noise between 07.00 and 23.00 would be between 63 -72 LA_{eq} , the EPS suggests that measures to mitigate operational noise are carried out e.g. controlling the traffic passing through the roads passing through residential areas close to the proposed development. Noise levels would also need to be monitored on completion of the construction phase, and at 2 year intervals following such.

Vibration assessment

The buildings found in the vicinity of the site are mainly old buildings which would be sensitive to vibrations and the EPS states that results from previous studies found that passenger vehicles do not produce vibration levels higher than 0.2mm/sec, whilst trucks do not produce vibration levels higher than 0.3mm/sec. These vibration levels are all lower than the accepted levels and thus would not cause any damage to any surrounding buildings. The results obtained for the proposed development indicate that the vibrations caused by cars or trucks would not be noticeable to people living in the buildings close by.

IMPACTS IN TERMS OF NOISE AND VIBRATIONS

The EPS indicates that impacts of noise during the construction phase are considered to be of major significance, save for locations 3 and 5 (the Clock Tower in the Cittàdella and the residential area outside the Cittàdella, respectively). The impacts however, are considered to be of a temporary and reversible nature.

During the operational phase, noise-related impacts on location 5 are considered to be of moderate to major significance. These conclusions remain valid vis-à-vis the latest version of the proposal.

PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

- Fitting effective exhaust silencers in all vehicles and mechanical equipment used for the purpose of the works.
- All percussive tools would be fitted with mufflers or silencers of the type recommended by the manufacturers while works are being carried out.

- Machines in intermittent use would be shut down in the intervening periods between works or throttled down to a minimum.
- Any additional equipment such as generators, compressors and pumps would be positioned so as to cause minimum noise disturbance. If necessary, acoustic barriers or enclosures would be provided.
- In order to minimise the likelihood of complaints, the local council and affected residents would be kept informed of the works to be carried out and of any proposed work outside normal hours. Residents would be provided with a point of contact for any queries or complaints.
- Noise levels are to be monitored during the different phases of the construction process to ensure that noise levels are kept to a minimum. Should the noise levels be high the building contractor shall ensure that all mitigation measures proposed are being implemented.
- During the operational phase, it is proposed that noise levels are monitored on completion of the construction phase.

RESIDUAL IMPACTS

No residual impacts are envisaged following mitigation.

3.7 Energy Use and Exterior Lighting

The EPS identified that the use of renewable energy sources such as solar panels is not being considered in this case due to the negative visual impact that would be incurred.

With respect to the lighting scheme, the following recommendations are being made:

- It is recommended that the lighting being used to be set up with light level sensors so as to switch on only when light levels are low, therefore saving light energy.
- Careful selection of the appropriate luminary power is also required according to the circumstances.
- Lights should be equipped with reflectors in order to make sure that light is directed only to those areas where it is required.
- To avoid glare, proper localization of lighting poles as well as shields needs to be implemented.

Amended lighting plans were requested by MEPA during the review of the EPS, due to concerns associated with the proposal's close proximity to a Special Conservation Area (SAC) at the Cittadella. Thus, in order to ensure that the car park will not result in an increase in operational lighting over and above the existing situation, the proposed location and amount of lights on each level is kept to a bare minimum.

The lower terrace of the proposed car park shall include lighting poles, 1.5 metres in height, with low-level free-standing luminaries at 5m centres installed on both sides of the roadway due to the wide span of the lower terrace. The upper terrace will have lighting poles 1.5 metres in height with low-level free standing luminaries high at 5m centres, installed on the roadway side. The EPS indicates that the lighting system will be energy-efficient LED lighting, activated through a light-sensitive photocell to turn on at dusk or in dark weather and off at dawn. The luminaires shall be full cut-off to avoid light pollution and shall be dimmed during off-peak hours. Details of the lighting arrangements as proposed can be found in Figures 8, 9 and 10 of the EPS Coordinated Assessment Addendum.

3.8 Traffic Assessment

The EPS provided a brief assessment on the traffic situation in the area, focusing on the fact that currently the site is being used for ad-hoc parking, which is used for approximately 50 vehicles at any one time. Chapter 11 in the EPS Coordinated Assessment provides details vis-à-vis traffic counts in the major junctions associated with the proposal. In terms of highway impact and according to the predictions of the

traffic study, the EPS concludes that no traffic problems are envisaged with the project even after the year 2016. The changes in the proposed plan for the car park do not require amendments to the conclusions of the traffic assessment carried out in the EPS. The conclusions in this report still stand.

3.9 Waste Management

The EPS states that the main phases of the proposed development which are anticipated to generate waste include the site clearing, excavation and construction phases, and the operational phase. With respect to the site clearing, since the project will be partly constructed on a rural hillside, the waste to be generated is mostly likely to consist of low-graded natural vegetation such as shrubs and grass. Should any soil be removed from the site prior to excavation, this is to be carried out in accordance with the Soil Preservation Act.

With respect to the excavation phase, this shall predominantly generate inert waste that may be reused on site. The project is likely to generate an estimated 3000 cubic metres of excavated material, and given the relatively small quantity of rock extraction, no mobile rock crusher will be installed on site. Thus, given that the maximum usage of the extracted material is being recommended, all the excavated material is likely to be used on site. Any excavated material that cannot be used on site shall be delivered and disposed of at a MEPA-authorized waste facility and reused and recycled where possible.

During the operational phase, minimal domestic waste is expected to be disposed of on site, mainly including waste arising from food consumption, which would be disposed of at an engineered landfill. Any recyclable materials should be also stored in appropriate containers on site.

Following the amendments to the proposal in 2012, there no form of bedrock cutting is envisaged, and therefore the car park shall be developed through cut-and-fill operations within the area currently occupied by existing debris on site.

3.10 Secondary and Cumulative Impacts

In terms of secondary impacts, the EPS states that the proposed development shall save time to commuters from searching for parking spaces and shall allow them to park closer to the Cittàdella. More parking spaces will reduce the tendency of double parking by workers at the Law Courts and parishioners during holy masses, this tendency currently blocks other visitors causing great inconvenience. The EPS also points out that the development of the car park would increase security and safety at the site.

The development of the car park is also being seen as leading to an eventual revision of the other present parking schemes at the Cittàdella with the possibility that some of the present parking spaces will be removed, which may possibly lead to improvements in the visual integrity of these areas.

Other secondary impacts listed in the EPS include: the generation of jobs during the construction phase, work for new staff during the operational phases such as security and maintenance, potential set up of new commercial outlets in the surroundings; and more business for existing commercial outlets in the area.

With respect to cumulative impacts, the EPS indicates that these should be foreseen in the context of the general proposals of the Cittàdella Master Plan, which aims to attract more tourist visitors to the Cittàdella, which would in turn increase the need for vehicle parking facilities. The cumulative impacts on the increase in public amenities around the Cittàdella is considered to be beneficial and of major significance.

However, in terms of the Cittadella Master Plan, the EPS indicates that two additional alternative locations had been identified on the northwestern and western slopes of the Cittadella, which, if eventually further considered and constructed may lead to cumulative impacts in terms of land use, landscape and visual amenity, geology and hydrology, ecology and cultural heritage. Other than the Master Plan, no further developments in the area are envisaged to have a cumulative impact due to the construction of the car park.

The changes in the proposed plan for the car park do not require amendments to the conclusions of the secondary and cumulative impacts assessment carried out in the EPS. The conclusions in this report still stand.

Environment Protection Directorate Note (5): Whilst the Directorate acknowledges the relevance of the considerations mentioned by the consultants, the EPD considers these as being beyond the scope of the EIA.

4. ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION DIRECTORATE COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Environment Protection Directorate notes that the proposed project is being presented as an opportunity to improve accessibility to the Cittadella by providing parking spaces. It also proposes to strengthen the contiguous bastions by creating stabilised slopes.. The original proposal was revised following comments provided by both MEPA and other stakeholders such as the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.

The Environment Protection Directorate is concerned about the impact that this proposal will have on the cultural landscape of the Cittadella, and on any potential archaeological remains on site. The proposed carpark will entail significant take-up of land in a sensitive area. The site is also a candidate for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

In its latest correspondence to MEPA, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage indicated that *“the latest plans show a decided improvement on the earlier versions both in terms of footprint covered and visual impact. Regarding the potential archaeological impact of these works, the Superintendence notes the developer’s intention to avoid entirely impacting potential archaeological remains by avoiding rock-cutting and keeping foundation construction to a minimum depth, impacting only modern debris layers. This notwithstanding, the possibility of uncovering archaeological remains at this site remains a possibility.”*

The site is located outside the development boundaries and is not legally designated for the construction of a carpark. The site is covered by enforcement notice (ECF 1082/01 -‘Excavations and levelling of soil without permit’) in relation to the existing car parking area. The existing development is therefore not considered to be a valid baseline for the overall assessment of the acceptability of changes to the site.

The establishment of development commitments on this site may lead to eventual pressures for future expansion onto the surrounding land and impact the context of the Cittadella.

The environmental assessment carried out for this development proposal also identified a number of other potential impacts on the environment, some of which are of ‘major significance’ if not sufficiently mitigated.

APPENDIX 1:

Comments received during EIA Scoping Stage (19th February to 20th March 2007) – Identification of issues to be included in the Terms of Reference for the Environmental Planning Statement (EPS)

Entity	Comment	MEPA Response
<p>Superintendence of Cultural Heritage</p> <p>Email 09/03/2007</p>	<p>In response to your letter dated 19th February 2007, please find following these Terms of Reference for a Cultural Heritage Assessment.</p> <p>Preamble The proposed project is one of the largest projects ever proposed in the vicinity of the Cittadella and has considerable infrastructural implications. Potential impacts may occur within the footprint of the project and along access routes. Potential impacts may include direct material impacts, as well as visual impacts on an iconic monument of national significance.</p> <p>Scope For the purposes of this document, cultural heritage is defined by Article 2 of the Cultural Heritage Act (2002). This includes movable or immovable objects of artistic, architectural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic, palaeontological and geological importance. The evaluation should be comprehensive and exhaustive. The evaluation will include the description and analysis of features in the study area he study area will include: the footprint of the proposed project 1000 metre radius around (a) roads that may require modification 50 metre radius around access roads viewshed of the project.</p> <p>The evaluation is expected to describe and analyse the cultural landscape, describe and analyse the features within it, assess the impacts of the proposed development, and propose mitigation measures for the protection of the cultural landscape and features. he evaluation will give due consideration to the scenic and aesthetic values of the cultural heritage assets that might be actually or potentially impacted by the works. The traffic management implications of the proposed project are to be taken into account in identifying and assessing actual and potential impact on cultural heritage assets and values.</p> <p>Methodology The cultural evaluation may include desktop research, topographic survey and remote sensing as necessary. The evaluation techniques must not include collection of material, excavation or any other activity, which would impact physically on the cultural heritage resource, in violation of heritage legislation.</p>	<p>Noted. The feedback had been discussed with SCH and the issues associated with cultural heritage had been included as part of the Terms of Reference for the EPS.</p>

	<p>Data collection will take account of on-going research, investigation and interventions being undertaken by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, the University of Malta and the Restoration Unit of the Works Division.</p> <p>Any previously unrecorded cultural heritage features that are identified are to be promptly reported to the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage and should be left undisturbed, as per heritage legislation. The features of cultural heritage identified are to be described and plotted with grid references, on Data Capture Sheets, the design of which should be approved in advance by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The Data Capture Sheets will be presented as an appendix. The analysis of the features will be included in the main report. The analysis should indicate where further investigations by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage might be necessary. This analysis should be holistic, and must treat the cultural landscape in its integrity. Attention should be given to the relationships between features of cultural heritage and their landscape context. This analysis should include a study of visual impacts, paying particular attention to existing relationships (including visual and spatial) between cultural features, visual impact of the project on the landscape. The consultant is to discuss and identify strategy and methodology with the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage or his delegate, prior to the start of the evaluation.</p> <p>The consultant shall maintain close communication with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage throughout the evaluation, which may result in changes in strategy and/or methodology in the course of the evaluation.</p> <p>Limits of Authorisation Any form of investigation or prospecting which may have a material impact on the cultural heritage, (including collection of artifacts during field walking, or excavation), can only be undertaken by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage.</p>	
<p>Kummissjoni Ambjent</p> <p>Email 13/03/2007</p>	<p>With reference to your memo of the 19th February 2007, wherein you confirmed that the development proposal in caption will need an Environmental Planning Statement, we wish to make the following points:</p> <p>1. As a Commission instituted by the Archdiocese of Malta we cannot comment on specific development projects that are being proposed in Gozo. However, the Commission has always been very clear and consistent about its beliefs on environmental issues and sustainable development principles. It is based on these</p>	<p>Noted. Assessment of impacts associated with ecology, noise and vibrations, air quality and visual impacts have been included in the Terms of Reference for the EPS.</p>

	<p>overall guiding principles that we are making the following recommendations regarding the proposal in caption.</p> <p>2. We agree that since this proposal is for development outside development zone and as confirmed in the PDS, the area in question is designated as a Special Area of Conservation and an Area of High Landscape Value, it would be opportune to ask for an EIS.</p> <p>3. The TOR for this EIS should include:</p> <p>a) A full assessment of the need for such a development.</p> <p>b) A full assessment of environmental impacts on the flora and fauna and any special habitats within the footprint of the area, as well as within the area of influence which may be quite extensive. These impacts are to include those arising from the construction phase such as atmospheric releases of fine particulates and other aerial contaminants; noise and vibrations; and others. When the parking area becomes operational, the impacts to be considered include increase disturbance by increased traffic in the area; increased atmospheric releases of various air contaminants; noise and vibrations, esthetic impacts etc...</p>	
<p>Nature Trust Malta</p> <p>Email 14/03/2012</p>	<p>Site protection</p> <p>The Cittadella is a Natura 2000 site and any development on site or within its immediate surroundings are subject to the EU Habitats Directive and relevant local legislation which requires an Appropriate assessment for the development proposed: LN 257 of 2003 states :</p> <p><i>“13. (1) Where it appears to the Competent Authority that an application for consent under these regulations relates to an operation or activity which is or forms part of a plan or project which:– (a) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the SAC, and (b) is likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, the Competent Authority shall make, or require the applicant to make, an appropriate assessment, of the implications of the operation or activity on the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of subregulation 2 of this regulation, the Competent Authority may give consent to the operation or activity only after having ascertained that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and if appropriate, after having obtained and taken into account the opinion of the general public and representations made within such reasonable time as the Competent Authority may specify.”</i></p> <p>Landscape</p> <p>Most of the area is already in use as a carpark and as such has been subject to disturbance. Any</p>	<p>Noted. The issues related to site protection and protected sites, landscape, archaeology and visual impacts have all been included as part of the Terms of Reference for the EPS.</p>

	<p>development on site should aim to retain the unique landscape character of the whole Cittadella area and its rural views – the site is after all designated as an Area of High Landscape Value. Ideally only traditional dry stone walls should be constructed and landscaping should use species typical of the area such as the endemic <i>Darniella melitensis</i>.</p> <p>Otherwise it is assumed that the vegetation on the rocky base of the Cittadella will remain untouched.</p> <p>Natura 2000 site and species If the parking will be against a fee, it could be suggested that a small part of the income is directed towards the management of this Natura 2000 site and the in-situ and ex-situ conservation of its very rare species <i>Linaria pseudolaxiflora</i> and <i>Chamomilla aurea</i>.</p> <p>Light Pollution: The site is also important for Bat species <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> and <i>Myotis blythii</i> which are listed on Annex II of Council directive 92/43/EEC – this is relevant in terms of light pollution on site. It is therefore strongly recommended that if the site will necessitate artificial lighting then only full cut-off fixtures should be used.</p> <p>Archaeology: Bearing in mind the ancient origins of the Cittadella, proper archaeological surveys should be conducted prior to any land modification.</p>	
<p>Din I-Art Helwa Letter 13/03/2012</p>	<p>Din I-Art Helwa is in favour of the part of the proposal which involves strengthening the existing bastion walls since they are in a dilapidated state and these works are urgently required. Works must be solely restoration works carried out with extreme sensitivity to the site.</p> <p>Din I-Art Helwa however objects strongly to any other form of intervention that could damage in any way this important archaeological and environmental site.</p> <p>The whole of the Cittadella, including the hill on which it stands, is an Area of Archaeological importance as declared in Government Notice 765/98 of 1998. Moreover, the site in Foreman Street at the foot of the hill contains remains of a Roman wall. This was also confirmed by a Government Notice 153/95 of 1995.</p> <p>The proposed car park will destroy an area of 6000 square metres of ecologically sensitive countryside and replace it with hard surface road finish. This is unacceptable in this area which has been declared by MEPA as a Special Area of Conservation of International Importance in accordance with the Flora, Fauna and Natural</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

	<p>Habitats Protection Regulations 2003 (Government Notice 223 of 2005, Development Planning Act and Environment Protection Act).</p> <p>This is also an area of High Landscape Value, and no amount of landscaping could sufficiently mitigate the damage that would be done to the view of the Ċittadella from the surrounding countryside if the proposed plan is approved.</p> <p>Din I-Art Helwa is therefore of the opinion that no form of the development at all should ever be allowed in this area and that this application should be refused.</p> <p>We also note that ECF 01082/01 was issued on this site for the excavation and leveling of soil without a permit, and that a Direct Action Notification letter was sent on 26/01/2005. The site should be reinstated to its original state.</p> <p>We recommend that a Park & Ride solution is explored to help solve the parking problem in Victoria, but this central historical and archaeological asset of the island should never be compromised, as it certainly would be if this application were to be approved.</p>	
<p>Ministry for Gozo Letter 10/03/2007</p>	<p>With reference to your letter dated 19th February 2007 regarding the contents of an EIA on the application referred to in caption, I am submitted a nil reply.</p>	<p>Noted; no further comments.</p>

APPENDIX 2:

Comments received through EPS Review period (05.12.2011 to 11.01.2012)

2. Consultees' Comments

A. Environmental Health Directorate

Comments	AIS Responses	EPD Comment
<p>With reference to your e-mail dated 5th December 2011 regarding subject indicated in caption and following review of the EPS submitted, please be informed that this Directorate would like to submit the following comments/recommendations regarding this proposed development :</p> <p>Applicant is to be recommended to adopt best practice methods especially during the site clearance, excavation and construction phases and to implement all proposed mitigation measures to mitigate adverse impacts from noise and vibration on nearby sensitive receptors in the Area of Influence and on the general public. All proposed good site practices should be adopted and preferably works should be carried out during normal working hours to minimise the likelihood of complaints. Working hours may need to be reviewed accordingly so as to minimise noise impacts and inconveniences. Additional noise and vibration attenuation measures should be implemented if necessary.</p> <p>The proposal that noise levels are monitored throughout the different phases of the construction phase to ensure that noise levels are kept to a minimum should be implemented in view that noise resulting from these activities will last throughout the construction period which as stated in the EPS will span approximately 12 months.</p> <p>The proposed monitoring during the operational phase is also highly recommended.</p> <p>Although it is expected that vibration impacts during the construction phase will not be significant, compliance with SOPs and monitoring are highly recommended so as to ensure that no unforeseen significant vibration impacts will result. Vibration attenuation measures should be implemented if and as necessary.</p> <p>An air quality assessment has not been carried out. However any adverse air</p>	<p>It is common practice that best practice methods and standards are adopted during all phases of the development. Normally all such issues are included in MEPA permit conditions, therefore the recommendations being sought by Environmental Health Directorate will be complied with accordingly.</p>	<p>Noted; comments from EHD will be taken into consideration during the compilation of the EPD Report on the EIA.</p>

<p>pollution impacts on sensitive receptors from dust and especially emissions resulting from heavy vehicles during the construction phase should be taken into consideration and adequate mitigation measures implemented accordingly.</p> <p>A waste management strategy should be adopted and strictly implemented so that all generated waste streams will be contained, separated and disposed of safely through the appropriate facilities and according to the necessary permits/licences.</p> <p>It is also pertinent that storm water runoff be carefully managed and properly channeled and that adequate measures are taken to ensure that no water used for wheel washing and general cleaning runs off the site. The proposal that during the operational phase storm water runoff contaminated with oil residues is passed through an oil separator is also recommended.</p> <p>The recommendation that excavation is carried out during the dry season to minimise adverse impacts from contaminated storm water runoff should be implemented where possible.</p> <p>The drawing up and implementation of a Management Plan for all phases of the project thus ensuring adherence to proper site management practices is of utmost importance in mitigating adverse impacts and nuisances on sensitive receptors in the Area of Influence and on the general public. This should include operational management monitoring of construction works which is highly recommended so as to ensure implementation of all necessary mitigation measures and adherence to work practices throughout all the phases of the project.</p> <p>All soil removed from site is to be disposed off as directed by the competent authority.</p> <p>A traffic management plan should also be implemented to prevent nuisances and adverse impacts, including impacts from construction vehicles disposing waste material during the construction phase. (Although in EPS it is stated that this will be negligible).</p> <p>Regular and proper pest control should also be implemented, should vermin, especially rodents pose a nuisance especially during site clearance and excavation phase.</p> <p>It is recommended that all proposed</p>		
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<p>mitigation measures regarding major impacts arising from this project are to be strictly implemented by applicant to mitigate any significant adverse health effects and nuisances on the Area of Influence and the general public. The possible health effects of any residual impacts that cannot be mitigated should also be taken into consideration.</p> <p>Moreover any other unpredicted impacts and nuisances which may arise from this project and that may have a significant adverse effect on public health should be immediately addressed by the applicant and the necessary mitigation measures taken.</p> <p>All relevant complaints lodged should be investigated and remedial action taken immediately.</p> <p>All complaints lodged and actions taken are to be recorded and such records are to be readily available to the Competent Authorities when requested.</p> <p>It is also recommended that the proposed monitoring plans should also be implemented.</p>		
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B. Superintendence of Cultural Heritage

Comments	AIS Responses	MEPA Comment
<p>With reference to your Letter of Consultation dated 5 December 2011, the Superintendence draws attention to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference communicated by the Superintendence on 9 March 2007 • Initial comments and concerns expressed by the Superintendence in correspondence, dated 8 April 2004 and 30 August 2005 • The Environmental Planning Statement (EPS) as received by the Superintendence on 5 December 2011. <p>Data Capture</p> <p>It is to be noted that data compilation is almost exclusively limited to published material and desk-top research. A major source seems to be the list of scheduled monuments as compiled by the Malta Environment & Planning Authority. Data collection cards have not been compiled for the individual cultural heritage features or structures.</p> <p>The study does not highlight the cultural heritage value and significance of the terraced</p>	<p>A copy of the final version of the CHA (including data cards) is provided in Appendix III of this document.</p> <p>We think that the concept of cultural landscape has been duly</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted; however concerns from the EPD and HPU on the</p>

<p>fields around the Ċittadella. This lacuna erroneously debases the importance of the terracing and incorrectly divorces these from the Ċittadella itself. It is already unfortunate that the base of the Ċittadella hill has been encroached up by urban sprawl. The slopes around the Ċittadella, including the terraced fields, are an integral part of the landscape and have a high cultural heritage value. The study should have prioritised this central matter, thus avoiding the perception of the terraces as potential development plots.</p> <p>Furthermore, the study misses the point about the illegality of the present ad hoc car park. It is to be remembered that this illegal parking was the result of unauthorized and unmonitored development that amounts to a veritable rape of the cultural landscape of the Ċittadella and its environs. This cultural landscape is iconic and renowned. It is one of Gozo's more familiar attractions which is often promoted internationally.</p> <p>The development application seeks to perpetuate the existing illegality of the car park and exponentially increase the damage already caused to the cultural standing of the Ċittadella. The very presence of the car park in its current state is senseless, while the proposed increase of the projected extension undermines not only the values of the Ċittadella, but also its potential for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The EIA is weakened by the fact that it misses this point altogether.</p> <p>Nevertheless, and despite certain lacunae, the Environment Planning Statement (EPS) gives a strong overview of the cultural heritage assets within and around the Ċittadella, of their value and of the impacts upon these assets. The EPS should expedite an informed decision on this application.</p> <p>Cultural Heritage (Built Heritage)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EPS lists the Ċittadella and historical structures within the Ċittadella and its immediate environs, listing in particular those that are protected by scheduling. Such features are tabulated in Table 7.2, which notes that impact by the proposed development on these features will be major, adverse and irreversible. These indicated impacts are unacceptable. - The impact as noted includes potential threat to the stability of the slopes and the fortifications. The Superintendence considers that such a threat is unacceptable. 	<p>emphasized throughout the report.</p> <p>Illegality is considered to be outside the remit of the cultural heritage assessment report of the EPS.</p> <p>The WH list was mentioned, however not in conjunction with the illegal parking lot.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p>	<p>cultural landscape still stand.</p> <p>The consultants need to look into how the baseline situation has evolved before the current illegal development, using the same tools (e.g. aerial photos) used by MEPA for direct investigation of the actual case merits. Using an illegal development as if it were a valid point of departure for the assessment is not considered acceptable.</p> <p>AIS Further response:</p> <p>It was not possible to find any information about the area before this development. MEPA's Orthophoto Map dates 1998 is not clear enough to attest the damage incurred by the said development. The report has been updated to elaborate this aspect of illegality further in Section 2.7 and 3.3 of the report in Appendix III.</p> <p>Noted; comments from SCH will be taken into consideration during the compilation of the EPD Report on the EIA.</p> <p>With respect to the orthophoto maps, there are earlier aerial photos which are publicly available. Therefore, this response is not satisfactory.</p> <p>Noted.</p>
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<p>The Precautionary Principle should be used to guide planning decisions which should safeguard the stability of the slopes and summit of the Cittadella.</p> <p>Cultural Heritage (Landscape)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The study includes a series of photomontages taken from a number of viewpoints in Victoria and the surrounding area. The Superintendence draws particular attention to the views as seen from viewpoints 1, 2, 3 and 6, where the extensive visual and material impact is very evident. Even in their current format, these photomontages show very clearly the extent and depth of the physical impact of the proposed car park, which comes across as a visual aberration. - The mitigation measures suggested in the study are purely cosmetic and totally inadequate because they are designed to hide a car park, whose illegal origin has already damaged the Cittadella environs. The proposed development would have a negative, irreversible and unacceptable impact on the cultural landscape. - Such is the negative impact of the proposed regularization and extension of the illegal car park, that any suggestion of mitigation and cosmetic measure is misleading as these avoid the most obvious need for a thorough reinstatement/restoration of the destroyed terracing. In this, MEPA should lead and use its powers to ensure such reinstatement. <p>The Superintendence notes the statement at Section 6 (Historical and Cultural Heritage) of the Non-Technical Summary, where it is stated that:</p> <p>‘The proposed development will therefore not only irreversibly change the historical fabric and visual integrity of the features close to the area of proposed development and of the Cittadella as a whole, but also of the Gozitan cultural landscape’.</p> <p>The Superintendence is in agreement with this statement, stating further that such a development would have a very negative and totally unacceptable impact on the cultural heritage value of the Cittadella and its environs.</p> <p>This position is sustained by the data and information as compiled in the Environment Planning Statement.</p>		<p>Noted; comments from SCH will be taken into consideration during the compilation of the EPD Report on the EIA.</p> <p>Noted; comments from SCH will be taken into consideration during the compilation of the EPD Report on the EIA.</p>
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<p>The Superintendence objects most strongly to the proposed development.</p> <p>Furthermore, the illegal works as already executed are to be reversed and the site is to be rehabilitated. MEPA should ensure that following its refusal of the application a programme to rehabilitate the damaged landscape of the Cittadella is imposed.</p>		
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