

The Executive Chairperson  
Planning Authority  
St. Francis Ravelin,  
Floriana

Date: 27/01/2026  
ERA Ref.: EA 00035/18

Dear Sir, Madam,

**PA Ref.:** PA 02467/16  
**Proposal:** To demolish existing building, excavation of site and construction of old people's home (class 2a).  
**Location:** Buskett Forest Aparthotel, Triq ta' Sabbat, Ta' Sabbat, Dingli, Malta

*1. Introduction and general remarks*

Reference is made to the proposed construction of an old people's home, replacing the Buskett Forest Aparthotel (PA/05998/05) along Triq ta' Sabbat in Dingli.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) process had commenced in 2018 with the respective terms of reference for the studies issued (<https://era.org.mt/era-project/pa02467-16/>). The process was not concluded in view of subsequent discussions on the scale of the project and required changes to plans.

Following the downscaling of the project, to reduce the massing of the development and bring it more in line with the general massing of the approved PA/05998/05, a new Project Description Statement (PDS) was referred to ERA on 13 January 2026 (available from the above link).

*2. Screening in terms of the EIA Regulations (S.L. 549.46)*

The initial proposal required an EIA as it fell under Category I (Section 7.1.1.1) of Schedule I of the EIA Regulations. The proposed downscaled version falls within the scope of Category II (Section 7.1.2.2) of Schedule I and requires screening in accordance with regulation 14.

In terms of land use, the project will not take up fresh land but instead replace an existing building, similar to the approved PA/05998/05. Also noting the approved tourism development, the proposal for an old people's home is not of concern from a land use perspective *per se*.

During works, dust, noise and vibration generation is expected, which may affect sensitive receptors, namely residents and the natural environment in the surrounding area. Such disturbances are temporary and should be duly mitigated through proper adherence to all applicable requirements outlined in the Construction Management Site Regulations (S.L. 623.08). Of particular relevance is site hoarding, which in addition as a means to control dust emissions and debris, should also function as a noise barrier to abate/reduce noise effects on the surrounding environment.

During operations, the proposed facility is likely to generate increased traffic flows by visitors, employees and suppliers, however such increase is unlikely to significantly affect the ambient air quality in the area. To determine whether any effects on the noise climate of the surrounding environment are to be expected, updated traffic generation estimates (in terms of peak hourly traffic flows) are required. Other operational effects envisaged for this project are those typical

for urban developments, notably nocturnal lighting emissions, waste generation and any visual changes to the area due to the proposed building. All wastes are to be reduced at source, properly sorted and handled in accordance with the applicable waste regulations. External lighting on site shall be carefully designed to avoid light spill beyond the site boundaries and to not contribute to general light pollution in the area.

In terms of visual appearance, the development should not conflict with the surrounding landscape and not negatively affect views from the surrounding areas, notably from the surrounding public areas frequented by both residents and visitors/passersby. To this effect, additional photomontages are to be provided as part of this assessment, showing the visual appearance of the proposed development from the main approach road Triq il-Buskett and the backside of the site, showing its context with the surrounding agricultural area (e.g. from Sqaq tal-Marċ/Sqaq tal-Marġ). The photomontages (including the two viewpoints presented in the PDS) shall incorporate/visualise additional landscaping, which is required both at the front (entrance) of the site and along the boundaries facing the surrounding fields.

### 3. Screening in terms of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44)

The site is adjacent to MT0000018: L-Inhawi tal-Buskett u tal-Girgenti, which is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Special Protection Area (SPA), covered under the Natura 2000 network, and designated through Government Notices 1379 of 2016 and 112 of 2007, respectively. The site encompasses one of the few wooded areas of the Maltese Islands as well as surrounding open spaces, which are important as a concentration point for birds of prey. While the protected area hosts a variety of important habitats and species (both flora and fauna), of particular relevance are Annex I bird species such as the Lesser spotted eagle (*Aquila pomarine*), European honey buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), Western marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) and more. These migrant birds use the woodland as roosting areas and are sensitive to disturbances such as noise and light. The Natura 2000 Management Plan of the area highlights the need to avoid introducing any additional sources of disturbance. In this regard, it is important that such aspects are assessed in more detail, to ensure that the proposed project will not adversely affect the functioning and integrity of this protected site. The initial proposal was already subject to the requirement of an Appropriate Assessment (AA), and this screening concludes that such requirement remains applicable.

### 4. Conclusion and way-forward

The screening has concluded that the proposal does not warrant an EIA, but requires an Appropriate Assessment (AA), in view of the unclear impacts on the integrity of the adjacent protected Natura 2000 site. Terms of reference for the AA are attached to this correspondence in Annex I.

Further to the above, the following submissions are also required:

- Current and estimated peak hourly traffic flows for both weekdays and weekends, to determine whether any further evaluation of traffic-related noise emissions is required (note: the current scenario shall reflect traffic as existing at present, and traffic flows should be representative of the roads most affected by the development and should correspond to the development's operational hours, taking into account movements associated with employees and visitors); and

- Updated photomontages, including the additional viewpoints mentioned in section 2 and representing the required additional landscaping, to ensure the proposed building will not conflict with the visual amenity and landscape value of the surrounding area.

ERA reserves the right to issue its final position and recommended way-forward, including any environmental conditions, following the outcome of the AA and the required information listed above.

Yours faithfully,

Yves De Blick  
Senior Officer (Environmental Assessment)  
f/Director Regulatory Affairs

***Disclaimer***

*The above assessment results, the ensuing conclusions and requirements are without prejudice to any required changes or updates should the development proposal be eventually modified again or should the information/assumptions provided turn out to be incorrect. Any deviations of the proposal from this submission would need to be re-assessed and the merits of this assessment would need to be reopened.*