

PA06252/17: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING 4 STAR HOTEL AND THE SPA WING OF THE 5 STAR HOTEL, AND EXCAVATION OF SITE. CONSTRUCTION OF 3 LEVELS OF BELOW GROUND CAR PARKING; CONSTRUCTION OF GROUND FLOOR RETAIL COMPLEX (MIX OF CLASS 4B AND CLASS 4C) UNDER A LANDSCAPED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE; AND CONSTRUCTION OF RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX RISING TO A MAXIMUM OF 15 FLOORS ABOVE STREET LEVEL. DEVELOPMENT ALSO TO INCLUDE COMPLETE REFURBISHMENT (INCLUDING INTERNAL ALTERATIONS) OF THE EXISTING 5 STAR HOTEL, THE CONSTRUCTION OF FIVE ADDITIONAL FLOORS ON THE HOTEL TOWER AND CONSTRUCTION OF STEPPED HOTEL BLOCK RISING TO 13 FLOORS ABOVE THE PLAZA, IN PLACE OF THE SPA WING.

SITE AT, FORTINA SPA RESORT, IX-XATT TA' TIGNE &, TRIQ CENSU XERRI, SLIEMA, MALTA

1. Introduction

Reference is made to the above-captioned subject. The proposed development aims to redevelop the Fortina SPA Resort, involving the following interventions:

- Demolition of the existing 200-room four-star hotel and construction of a block of residential apartments with a total capacity of 109 residential units, three underlying levels of parking providing 419 parking spaces, and a commercial space on the ground floor, with a total gross floor of 27,000 sqm;
- Refurbishment of the existing five-star hotel and construction of an additional five floors, increasing the total elevation to 22 floors, the total capacity to 144 rooms and the gross floor to 11,760 sqm;
- Demolition of the spa block, which is the current building behind the existing five-star hotel, as seen from Triq Ix-Xatt, and replacement by a 13 floor building with a total capacity of 69 rooms and a gross floor of 3,255 sqm, including restaurants at the plaza level; and
- Construction of an open space with public access, between the refurbished five-star hotel, the spa block and the residential complex, with a gross floor of 2,460 sqm.

Following the submission of a Project Description Statement (PDS), the project was identified to fall within the scope of Schedule IA, Category II, Section 10: Changes or Extensions to Approved Projects of the then EIA Regulations, 2007 (S.L. 549.46) (*any change or extension of development which would result in the development listed in Category I and II, already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed, which may have significant adverse effects on the environment including (b) an amount equivalent to 50 % of the appropriate thresholds, given that the proposed development will lead to an increase greater than 50% of the appropriate threshold*).

Following detailed screening in line with Schedule IB of the then EIA Regulations, 2007 (S.L. 549.46), it was concluded that impacts of the development are unlikely to be significant to the point of warranting an EIA, as long as:

- (i) various mitigation measures are duly incorporated into the mainstream development consent mechanism;
- (ii) further information is provided in relation to potential cumulative air quality impacts; and

- (iii) any potential impact is mitigated by means of conditions and specifications (e.g. approved documents) in the development permit.

In this regard, the ERA Report on EIA Exemption was issued to the Planning Authority on 15 December 2017, in accordance with the then EIA Regulations, 2007 (S.L. 549.46). On 23 February 2018, the required Air Quality Study was submitted to ERA for its review and conclusion. Following ERA comments, an updated version of the said Air Quality Study was submitted to ERA on 26 February 2018.

2. Air Quality Study

The concentrations of the baseline levels were compared with the results obtained from the model for the following scenarios for the operational phase of the proposed development:

- *Scenario 1*: Baseline 2017;
- *Scenario 2*: Year 2021 (no development);
- *Scenario 3*: Year 2021 (with development);
- *Scenario 4*: Year 2026 (no development); and
- *Scenario 5*: Year 2026 (with development).

ERA notes that there is a discrepancy of more than 40 percent between the modelled values and the values obtained through ERA air quality monitoring, which to the ERA's opinion cannot be explained. Nevertheless, provided that the model operated correctly and the data input in the model was correct, even with an increase in the 2017 baseline levels of 40 percent, the significance level of the potential impacts on air quality seem to remain unaltered. The Air Quality Study concludes the said impacts as follows:

| <i>Impact</i> | <i>Significance of impact</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Impact on air quality (PM ₁₀) due to increase in traffic | Negligible |
| Impact on air quality (NO ₂) due to increase in traffic | Negligible |

Both NO₂ and PM₁₀ are within the annual limit of 40 µg/m³, whereby the increases during the operational phase of the development are considered having a negligible impact on the air quality in the area. Given the negligible impact, no mitigation measures are being proposed, and therefore the residual impacts remain negligible.

3. ERA assessment and conclusion

Further to the conclusion of the ERA Report on EIA Exemption (PA/06252/17 – 194b-d) and following detailed review of the submitted Air Quality Study, ERA concludes that any impacts of this development per se are unlikely to be significant.

Therefore, subject that the mitigation measures proposed in the PDS (PA/06252/17 – 83) are duly incorporated into the mainstream development consent mechanism, and ERA's conditions (PA/06252/17 – 194b) are included as an approved document in the development permit, ERA has no objections against the proposal from an environmental point of view.

ERA still also notes that, in the absence of a clear plan-level picture of the development capacity of the surrounding area of influence, such case-by-case assessment of individual development proposals has important limitations vis-a-vis proper evaluation of the actual cumulative air quality impact.

Yours faithfully,

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