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| <b>Meeting</b>             | EIA Public Consultation in relation to the following proposal:<br><br>PA/08969/19 – EA00064/19: Demolition of existing structures, ramp, gates and boundary walls, Uprooting and planting trees. Proposed rehabilitation of disused soft stone quarry, including filling of same and landscaping works. Proposed construction of old people's home (class 2A) that comprises of basement (level - 1), three floors (levels 0, 1, 2) above ground and roof structures at level 3. The basement level consists of a car park having 137 parking spaces, 6 accessible parking spaces and 1 accessible van space, an unloading/loading area, kitchen, dining areas and ancillary facilities, Level 0 consists of a reception area, lounge, multipurpose hall, accommodation (42-2-2bedded guest rooms) and ancillary facilities. It also includes a wandering garden, other gardens, 17 parking spaces, a space for a fire truck, minibuses, and ambulance, a drop-off zone, ramps leading to the basement level and a security room. Level 1 consists of a staff area, lounge, accommodation (42-2-2bedded guestrooms) and ancillary facilities. Level 2 consists of a crafts room, lounge, chapel, accommodation (42-2-2bedded guestrooms) and ancillary facilities. The roof level is an area for services at SM61, Triq il-Belt Valletta, Mqabba |
| <b>Date</b>                | 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2021  |
| <b>Duration</b>            | 17.00hrs – 18.20hrs  |
| <b>Location</b>            | Hexagon House, Spencer Hill, Marsa   |
| <b>ERA representatives</b> | Mr Kevin Mercieca, Ms Josianne Abela Vassallo, Ms Marie Louise Zammit  |
| <b>Minutes taken by</b>    | Ms Marie Therese Vella (ERA)   |

Mr Kevin Mercieca opened the online meeting giving details about the proposed development which is currently subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (PA 8969/19 – EA64/19 : Proposed construction of old people's home in Mqabba).

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

The public was also informed that proceedings shall be recorded and that comments can be put forward in an anonymous manner. There were no objections for the online meeting to be held in Maltese.

Sacha Dunlop on behalf of AIS delivered a presentation explaining the studies carried out as part of the EIA.

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

**Mr Omar Farrugia (Mayor of Mqabba Local Council).**

Joining me here is the executive secretary of the council, I would like to thank Sacha Dunlop for the informative presentation. On behalf of the local council, in the coming days, we are going to submit our thoughts in a detailed report. Our main concern to this proposal is that it is located outside the development zone and instead of having agricultural land we are going to have a massive development, which will surely impact the views of the locality of Mqabba. Another problem is the parking of this development, when we consider one or two people visiting almost 250 elderly, with all employees working in the home, surely this won't cover the proposed parking spaces. Another issue, as a resident and as a Mayor, is the Mqabba feast. During that week, we set off a large amount of fireworks, which the elderly might find disturbing. But as I said before, we are going to submit a detailed report with our concerns which I'm sure we'll find a way forward. We agree that we need more beds for our elderly, which this project is aiming for. Another problem is the number of trucks passing from our locality. We heard in the presentation that the trucks are to pass from arterial and main roads and not residential. Since Mqabba is surrounded by quarries and the commercial activity we have ongoing on a daily basis, regarding noise, emissions etc. etc., will surely impact our residents. So it's very important, that main roads are to be used rather than residential roads.

**Mr. Kevin Mercieca (Environment and Resources Authority).**

We thank you for your intervention and we look forward to receiving your comments.

**Jonathan Mifsud (Resident).**

I would like to ask regarding the Health and Safety of the elderly who are going to be living in a home surrounded by active quarries.

**Mr. Kevin Mercieca (Environment and Resources Authority).**

We have to check if the EIA coordinators can answer this question, I don't think it's in their remit. Not sure if Sacha has anything to add.

**Mr Sacha Dunlop (AIS Environment).**

I have nothing to add. The architect and the applicant who are here present can clarify if studies were carried out regarding Health and Safety.

**Patrick Ghigo (Resident).**

I would like to ask, if approved, the duration of the whole development. In my opinion a major project this size would take more time to complete. Can it be built in stone typical of Mqabba area, since we're famous for this, it would be a pity if a project like this is built in concrete. If the proposed three floors are built in this stone, can there be Maltese balconies, which are our traditional balconies. And to add to what our Mayor mentioned earlier, would there be an impact on the fireworks we set off from the nearby fields.

**Mr. Kevin Mercieca (Environment and Resources Authority).**

The architect will answer the first two questions together with the other questions asked previously. Regarding the fireworks query, the Mayor already mentioned that during the feast there will be an influx of people. It would be best for the local council to include this in their submission.

**Perit Charles Buhagiar (Med Design).**

Regarding the fireworks issue, I would appreciate if the local council would pass on to us the places from where they set off the fireworks. Mostly, the issue is, as stated by the Mayor, the effect of the fireworks on the elderly living in the home. Apart from this, it's good to keep in mind that when we talk about an old people's home, we are referring to a property where most elderly, when looking for a retirement home, choose to live in their locality. Moving away from their homeland would surely disturb them. As far as I'm aware, there are no retirement homes in the region of Luqa, Mqabba, Zurrieq, Safi and Qrendi. So this proposal is going to serve for all the elderly living here, not only, as others can join too, but at least our elderly from this area are going to have the option to retire in an old people's home where the locality is familiar. It is very important for them to keep strong to their roots as transferring them in other localities could cause problems. When building an old people's home, we need to have a large site, in fact this is 18,000sq.m., which is not easy to find. Usually large sites are located outside the development zone but if possible, the closer they are to the development zone, the better for the simple reason to keep our elderly close to their whereabouts. So this particular site is close to the development zone although outside the development zone, today it is a quarry. Another point for Sacha, when you mentioned the mitigation measures on excavation, you said that a geologist is needed to monitor the excavation. I think you were referring to a geo-technical engineer not a geologist Sacha, as a geologist is a person who studies rock, whilst a geo-technical engineer is someone who recognizes the movement when excavating. As the mayor mentioned earlier on the influx of people visiting the elderly, I would like to add that we have to comply with the standards given by the Planning Authority regarding parking facilities and as explained very well by the coordinator, the number of parking spaces proposed exceeds the number in these standards. We don't know for sure how many people are going to be there, but we know for sure that we are adhering to all the standards of the Planning Authority. Considering that today the site is a quarry, and we have a proposal to provide an old people's home for the elderly in this region with landscaped surroundings, environmentally friendly with PV panels on the roof, and water reservoirs for harvesting rainwater, I think that it will be beneficial not just for its function to the region but it will also be a project which is environmentally sustainable.

**Mr Omar Farrugia (Mayor of Mqabba Local Council).**

I will send the places from where we set off the fireworks to the Architect.

**Ryan Vella (Resident).**

When comparing this project to the present quarry, the old people's home is beneficial for the locality, but my concern to ERA and the Planning Authority is, who will eventually decide on the outcome, that this is located outside the development zone, in a scheduled area, which in the years to come will return to agricultural land? In my opinion, this major project is going to ruin all the characteristics of a small village like Imqabba. Say the cars for example, the EIA mentions that there is going to be less emissions and less noise. This is true when compared to the quarry, but we need to compare it to the agricultural land, which for sure the impact will be much more when building this project.

**Mr Omar Farrugia (Mayor of Mqabba Local Council).**

My last question to the architect, if the home is approved, would it be possible to allocate a certain amount of beds for our residents, say 5%?

**Perit Charles Buhagiar (Med Design).**

I totally agree with you but this depends upon the running of the home. If the operation is going to be through the Government, since in some cases the Government buys beds from privately operated homes. Yes I agree with you that priority should be given to people from Imqabba and from the region.

Mr Kevin Mercieca closed the meeting by confirming that the points raised have been recorded and noted. He also thanked the participants and invited them to send any further comments, preferably by email to [eia.malta@era.org.mt](mailto:eia.malta@era.org.mt), or by post to 'The Director, Environment and Resources Authority, Hexagon House, Spencer Hill, Marsa', by the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2021.



**Environment & Resources Authority**

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