

# Environmental Impact Assessment

## Screening according to Schedule III of S.L. 549.46

**ERA Reference no.:** EA/00065/19

**PA Reference no.:** PA/02454/19

**Project Title:** Outline application to excavate three floors below existing level, and construction of basement level -3 garage for 380 cars, basement level -2 for storage in conjunction with Pama Supermarket and formation of underground link to existing Pama stores, basement level -1 retail class 4B, ground floor (road level) entrance lobby building and landscaped garden over development and new vehicular entrance to Pama Supermarket from Pantar Road.

**Location:** Site at, Triq Pantar, Mosta.

**Screening date:** December 2019

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## I. BACKGROUND

### 1. Outline of Proposal

- 1.1. The proposal involves the development of three underground levels with a total gross floor area of 35,127 m<sup>2</sup> spread equally over the three floors, including:
  - Car park with a capacity of 380 cars at level -3;
  - Store at level -2, with an underground connection to the existing PAMA supermarket building; and
  - Class 4B retail space (supermarket) at level -1.
- 1.2. At ground level, an entrance building is proposed, together with a landscaped garden. In order for the development to connect with the existing PAMA complex, a new vehicular entrance is being proposed from Triq tal-Pantar (see Figure 1-6).



Figure 1: Proposed development – photomontage (Source: PA/02454/19 – 48a-b)



Figure 2: Proposed car park at level -3 (Source: PA/02454/19 – 1m)



Figure 3: Proposed store at level -2 (Source: PA/02454/19 – 1l)

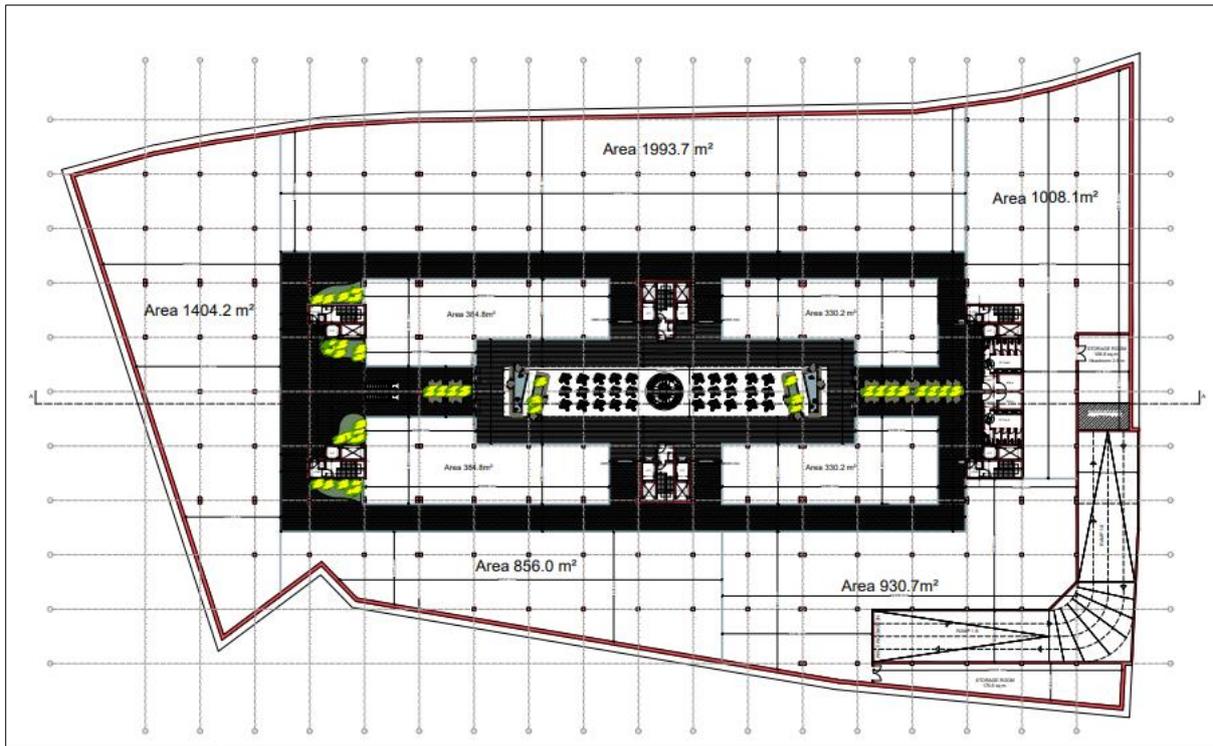


Figure 4: Proposed shopping mall at level -1 (Source: PA/02454/19 – 1j)



Figure 5: Proposed entrance building at ground level (Source: PA/02454/19 – 1h)

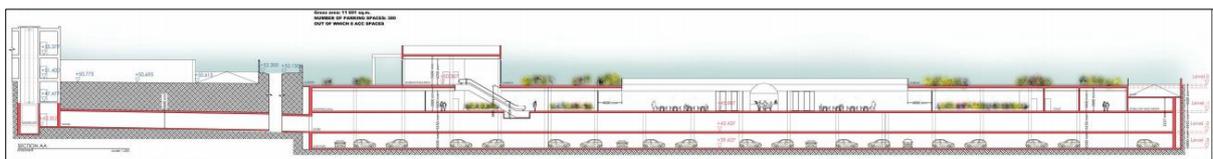


Figure 6: Indicative section of proposed development (Source: PA/02454/19 – 1m)

## 2. Site context

The site covers an area of approximately 13,700 m<sup>2</sup> and is located outside development zones (ODZ), adjacent to the existing PAMA complex (see figure 7 and 9). According to the Central Malta Local Plan (2006), the site is earmarked as a Strategic Open Gap.

Whilst the site is currently predominantly characterised by agricultural fields, in the northern part of the site a structure for marble processing and marble storage is present (See Figure 8), which is proposed to be demolished to make way for the excavation of the site. Furthermore, in the southern part of the site, an area has been illegally converted into a marble storage area, including concrete sub flooring, which is currently subject to enforcement notice EC/00664/06.



Figure 7: Site plan (Source: PDS)



Figure 8: Existing situation on site (Source: PA Geoserver - Orthophoto (2016))

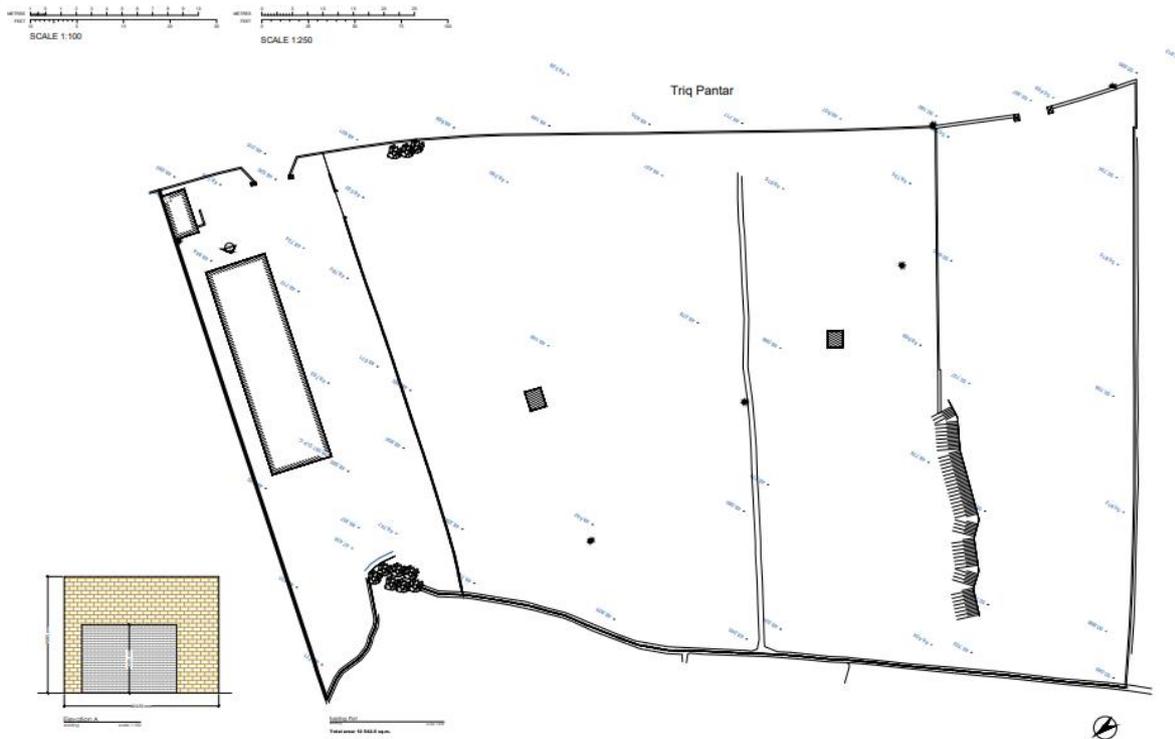


Figure 9: Existing plan (Source: PA/02454/19 – 1c)

### 3. Case history

The site was previously subject to the following relevant planning applications and enforcement notices:

Planning applications on site:

- PA/00530/94 - To erect boundary wall. Site at Triq tal-Pantar off Triq Valletta, Mosta. (Application approved)
- PA/01586/94 - Store for granite etc. and the polishing and processing of same. Triq il-Manwella, Triq Gdida, Mosta. (Application refused)
- PA/02057/00 - Application for sanctioning minor alterations to building and boundary wall. Site at, Triq Tal-Pantar, Mosta (Application approved following reconsideration of original decision)
- PA/04437/03 - To form stores for factory materials by affecting alterations on facade in factory grounds. Site at Francesco Fenech Limited, Triq Valletta, Mosta (Application approved)
- PA/04422/03 - To construct extension of factory consisting of two floors. Francesco Fenech Ltd., Triq Valletta, Mosta (Application approved)
- PA/03287/04 - To effect internal alterations to existing showrooms / offices and raise existing roof of same. Site at Francesco Fenech Limited, Triq Valletta, Mosta. (Application approved)
- PA/01138/06 - Area for open boat storage including support service and ancillaries. Site at, Triq Tal-Pantar, Mosta. (Application refused)
- PA/00068/08 - Change of use of existing ind. building into a commercial outlet class 4 plus signs and alterations and an extension of 130m<sup>2</sup>. Lawrence Fenech Ltd., Triq Tal-Pantar, Mosta. (Application refused)

Enforcement notices on site:

- EC/01329/96 - Change of use from store to workshop for polishing and processing of granite and marble resin without permit (PA decision reviewed by EPRT)
- EC/00664/06 - Masonry boundary wall instead of rubble construction, change of use of land for the keeping of marble sheets and mounds of marble residues + concrete sub flooring on soil surface. Site at, Triq Tal-Pantar, Mosta. (Pending direct action)

### 4. Screening Criteria

#### 4.1. EIA Screening

*(citations refer to S.L. 549.46, except where otherwise specified):*

The proposed development falls within the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (S.L. 549.46), notably in terms of Category II criteria in Schedule I: Section 7.1.2.1 (ii) and (iii). Therefore, the proposal was also screened in terms of the EIA Regulations.

### 5. Documents used for screening

- a. Project Description Statement (PDS), referred directly to ERA on 22 November 2019.
- b. Plans, Site Plans, Sections etc. [PA/02454/19 – 1 and 48];

## II. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

### 6. Assessment of Impacts and Ancillary Considerations

*(Screening in terms of Schedule III of the EIA Regulations, S.L. 549.46)*

The proposal will lead to undesirable urban sprawl beyond the designated area, specifically onto an area earmarked as a Strategic Open Gap. Whilst the current proposal is limited to underground development, it is likely that this proposal will contribute to additional future pressures for further development on site and for similar proposals in ODZ areas.

In view of the above, the proposed change in land use of the site is considered significant and whilst the proposal includes soft landscaping of the ground level, an adverse impact in terms of visual appearance of the site may also be expected.

The excavation of the entire site for the construction of the underground complex will generate a significant volume of excavation waste (152.750 m<sup>3</sup>, Globigerina limestone) which will all be disposed of. No possible reuse for this material on site has been identified in the PDS.

The demolition, excavation and construction works may potentially lead to significant noise and vibration levels, due to the operation of machinery and rock cutting, and in view of the close proximity of the residential area at the rear of the scheme site.

In view of the already existing traffic pressures in the area, mainly due to the PAMA shopping complex, the proposal is likely to contribute further to such pressures and therefore the additional traffic generated by the proposal may potentially contribute to the degradation of the ambient air quality within the area.

### 7. Screening Outcome

From the above it has been determined that the environmental concerns are significant such that the development cannot be considered as not requiring an EIA, however several of the main issues identified by the screening (e.g. rural land uptake) cannot be effectively addressed through further detailed studies, such that these would still leave important environmental concerns unresolved. In this regard, ERA objects to the said development.

### 8. Permitting Requirements

The proposed interventions may require a Nature Permit, as per S.L. 549.123, and therefore should the proposal be considered further against ERA's overall objection, the applicant would need to contact ERA's Environmental Permitting Unit ([nature.permitting@era.org.mt](mailto:nature.permitting@era.org.mt)) to discuss any requirements.

### III. ERA CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

As already communicated in an earlier response (document PA/02454/19 - 42a), ERA considers that the proposal would contribute to undesirable urban sprawl and would be leading to additional pressures for similar future proposals on ODZ, involving further encroachment of new buildings and structures which should be strictly contained within their designated areas.

In the said earlier response, ERA had also communicated that the development was within the scope of Schedule I [Category II, Section 7.1.2.1 (ii) and (iii)] of the EIA Regulations 2017 (S.L. 549.46), due to the extensive floor area of the proposed complex. The aforementioned environmental concerns are significant such that the development cannot be considered as not requiring an EIA, however the main concerns are such that these cannot be adequately addressed through further studies, also noting that various critical impacts are already fairly evident at this stage. Such implications need to be addressed directly through the mainstream development consent mechanism, taking into account ERA's position.

In this regard, ERA reiterates its objection to the proposal from an environmental point of view.

#### ***Screening Disclaimer***

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