

Environmental Impact Assessment

Screening according to Schedule III of S.L. 549.46

ERA Reference no.:	EA 00013/20
PA Reference no.:	PA 06875/19
Project Title:	Proposed change of use of existing ex-Air Malta offices (Class 4a) to proposed dormitory facilities (Class 2c) to serve adjacent ITS Campus. Proposal consists of kitchen and dining facilities at ground level, and accommodation facilities for 136 students at first and second floor. Works to include internal structural alterations and external lift installations as per attached drawings.
Location:	Ex-Air Malta Offices, Block 'D', off, Vjal I-Avjazzjoni, Luqa
Screening date:	May 2020

I. BACKGROUND

1. Outline of Proposal

- 1.1 The proposed development is for the change of use from an existing ex-Airmalta offices premises, in Triq I-Avjazzjoni Luqa, to a dormitory facility together with related amenities. The project will enable the said premises to service the main ITS Campus which is situated nearby. Refer to **Figure 1** and **2**.
- 1.2 The proposal involves the following interventions (refer to **Figure 3** and **4**):
 - Removal of existing loadbearing walls and replacing by means of rolled steel joists;
 - Construction of new walls over newly constructed reinforced structures;
 - Formation of new areas in terms of spatial layouts for the sleeping areas required;
 - Construction of roof structures so as to house services, and;
 - Construction of 3 lift systems.
- 1.3 The site area as quoted in the PDS is circa. 2350 sq.m and the total gross floor area for the ground level, level 1, level 2 and roof level is circa. 2802 sq. m.
- 1.4 The project will entail the formation of 22 dormitory rooms and is projected to house a total of 180 residents/students.

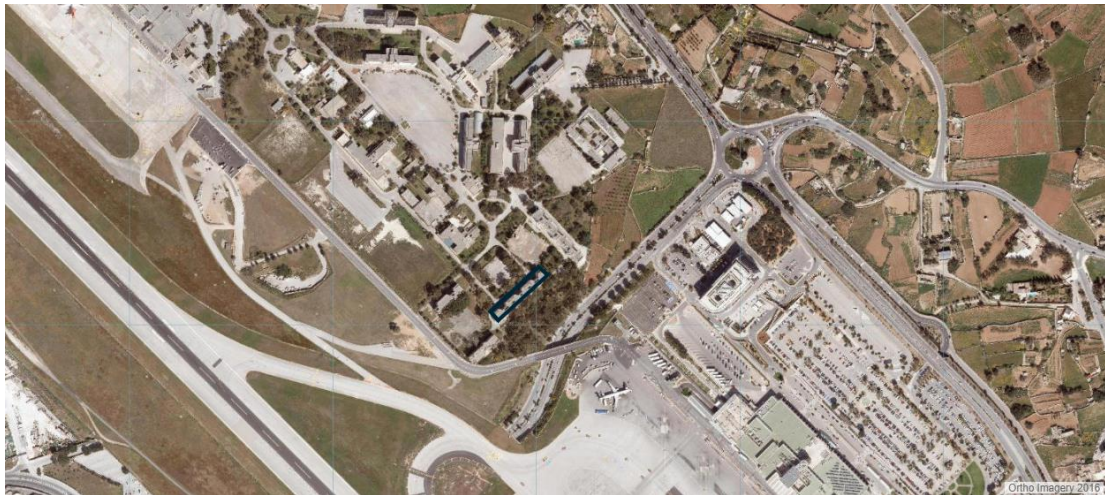


Figure 1: Aerial ortho-photo (2016) showing the location of the site (Source: *PA Geoserver*).

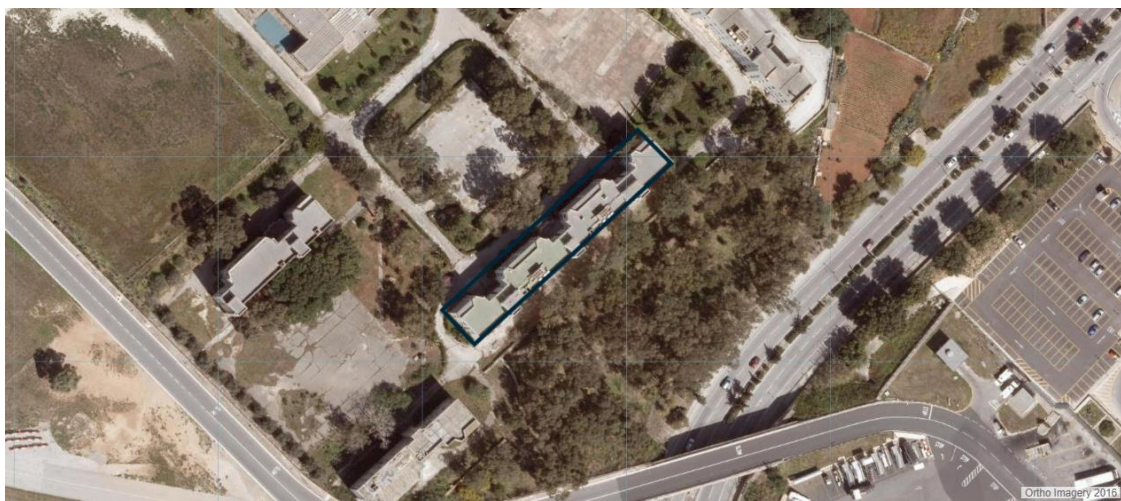


Figure 2: Aerial ortho-photo (2016) showing the location of the site up-close (Source: *PA Geoserver*).



Figure 3: Photo of the rear façade showing locations of the 3 proposed lift systems marked in red (Source: *E-apps PA/06875/19/45f*).

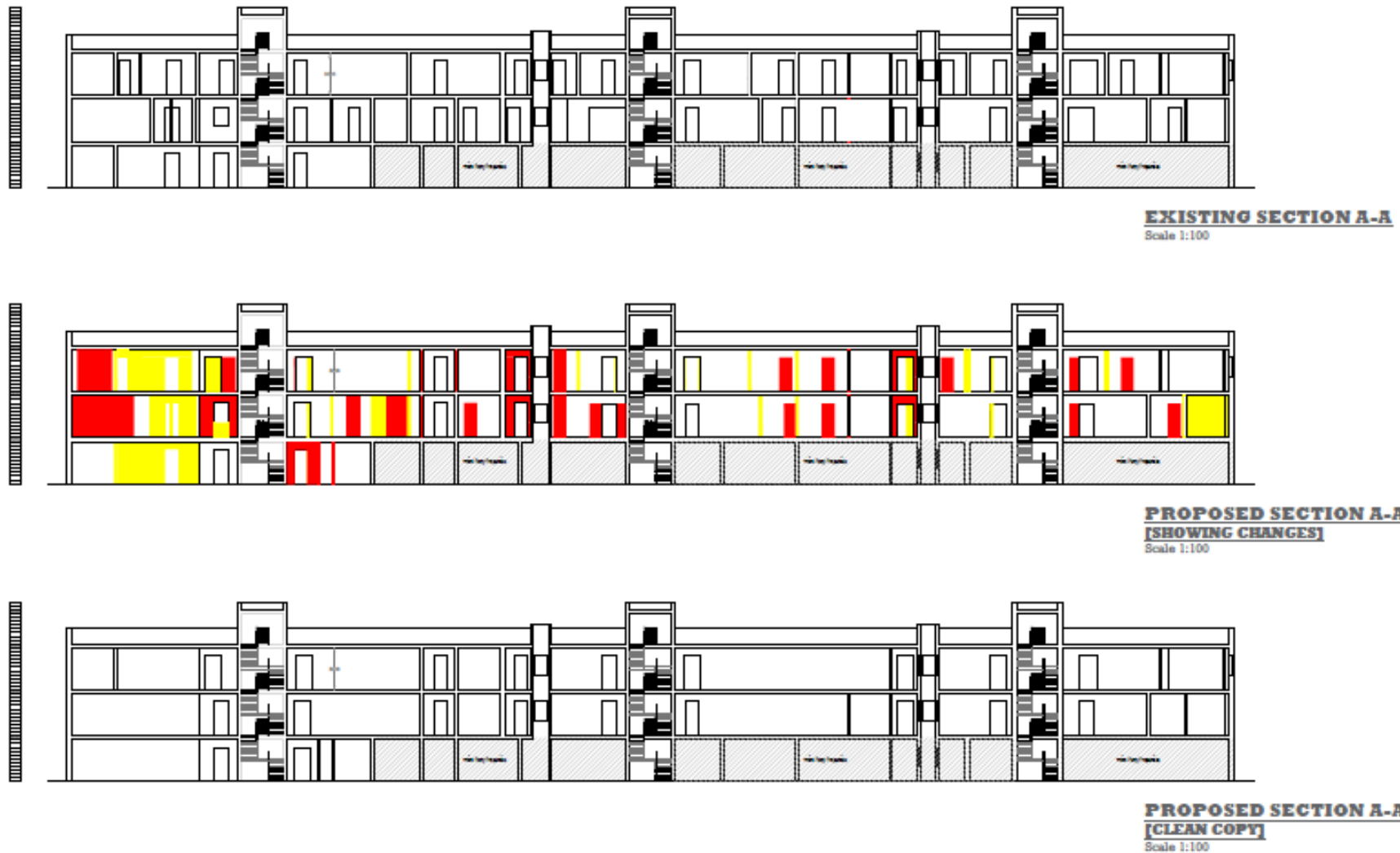


Figure 4: Section AA showing existing and proposed scenarios (Source: E-apps PA/06875/19/1i).



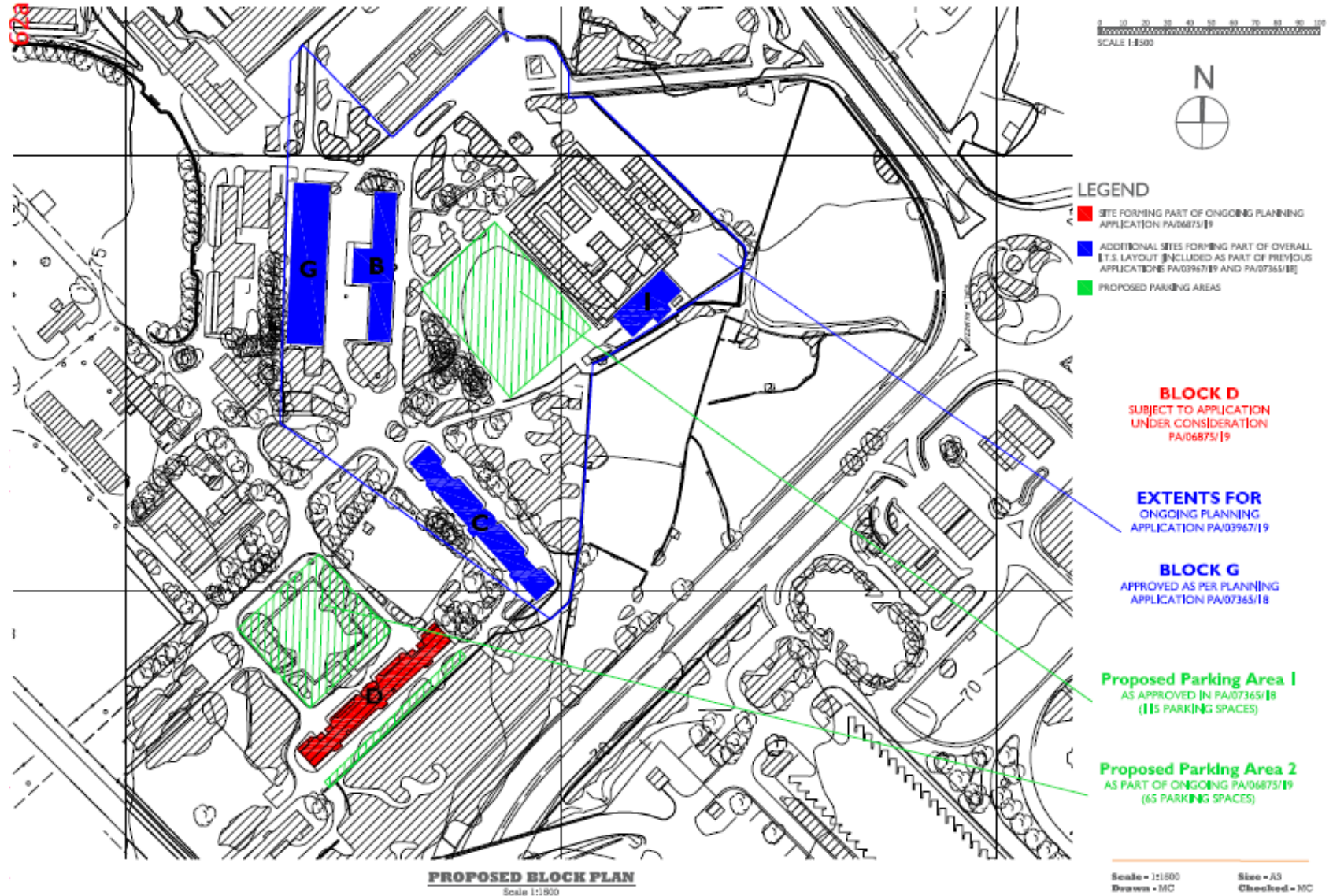


Figure 5: Proposed block plan for PA 06785/19 along with other PA's (Source: E-apps PA/06875/19/62a).

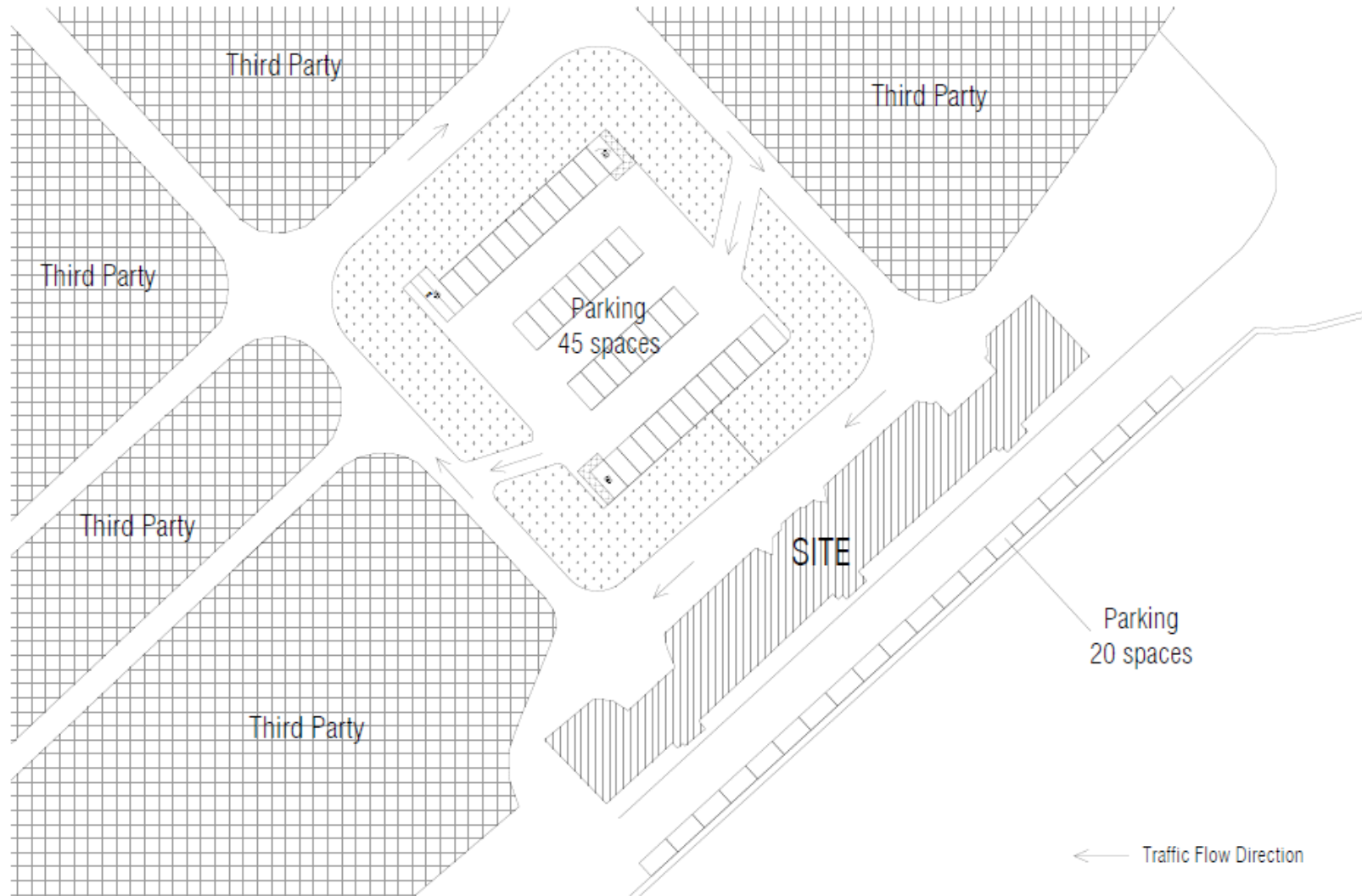
**BLOCK PLAN**

Figure 6: Block plan showing parking areas in the vicinity to be used as part of PA 06875/19 along with the other approved blocks forming part of the ITS complex (Source: *E-apps PA/06875/19/45d*).

2. Site context

- 2.1 The site is located Outside of the Development Zone (ODZ) in Luqa and falls under the designation of the South Malta Local Plan (SMLP).
- 2.2 The building is located within the ex Airmalta offices and lies a couple of hundred of metres away from the main entrance of the complex.
- 2.3 The site is located at the boundary of the groundwater safeguard zone and is designated as a Bird Sanctuary, 'L-Ajruport ta' Ħal-Luqa' scheduled under Legal Notice 41/03. The Bird Sanctuary is only a nominal environmental constraint and is not really related to environmental protection. Consequently, it is related to the establishment of a no-shooting zone for the purpose of public safety.
- 2.4 The existing parking areas on site, as shown in **Figure 5** and **6** will be used to cater the needs of this project as well as for the previously approved PA 07365/18 and PA 03967/19 which lie within the same complex and also form part of the ITS.

3. Site history

- 3.1 This site has not been previously subject to any Planning Applications.
- 3.2 Blocks G and B (refer to **Figure 5**) covered by PA 07365/18 and PA 03967/19, respectively for use as part of the ITS complex have been approved.

4. Screening Criteria

4.1 EIA Screening

The proposed development falls under the scope of Schedule I Category II Section 7.1.2.2. (*Construction or extension of hotels, holiday complexes, holiday villages, hostels, homes for the elderly, hospitals, or associated development, if located wholly or partly outside development zones and not covered by Category I*) of the EIA Regulations, 2017 (S.L. 549.46):

5. Documents used for screening

- i. ERA's Screening reply on PA E-apps at Doc 43a;
- ii. Project Description Statement (PDS) which was referred directly to ERA on 13th May 2020;
- iii. Plans available to ERA for viewing on PA E-Apps.



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)

Land and Resource Use

- 6.1 The proposal is for the change of use from the existing ex-Airmalta offices to a dormitory facility and so in light of the already committed footprint and the fact that no extensions are being proposed, there are no impacts in terms of land take-up.
- 6.2 The concept of uplifting derelict buildings for new uses is deemed positive in environmental terms as already existing buildings are put to reuse. In this regard, no significant impacts are envisaged in terms of resource use as the works involved are largely for internal alterations.

Waste and Geo-Environment

- 6.3 As regards generation of wastes during the construction phase, primarily efforts in reducing and recycling waste should be made. Examples of how this can be achieved is to recycle and upcycle materials and implement methods to produce resources from waste. Wastes which cannot be recycled/upcycled are to be disposed of in accordance with the Waste Management Regulations (S.L. 549.63) and Waste Management (Activity Registration) Regulations (S.L. 549.45).
- 6.4 During operation, re-using and recycling of waste, such as through the use of colour-coded bins and educational campaigns are strongly recommended.
- 6.5 The PDS states that no excavation works are necessary since the existing building will not be demolished, apart preparatory works required for the three proposed lift systems (**Figure 3**). In this regard, no significant impacts are envisaged on the geo-environment in view of the scale and nature of the proposal.
- 6.6 Although the site lies at the boundary of the groundwater safeguard zone, the nature of the proposal and the site location context are such that no significant impacts are envisaged as long as works are carried out in line to the Environmental Management Construction Site Regulations (S.L. 552.09).

Air Quality, Noise and Vibration

- 6.7 Impacts during construction are short-term and temporary. Construction works are to be in line with the Environmental Management Construction Site Regulations (S.L. 552.09). Moreover, the mitigation measures listed below are to be adhered to.
 - All mechanical plant and construction equipment is to be silenced by best practical means including silencing measures such as compressor panels and mufflers should be properly maintained and utilised.
 - Noise enclosures should always have all doors or hatches closed when the



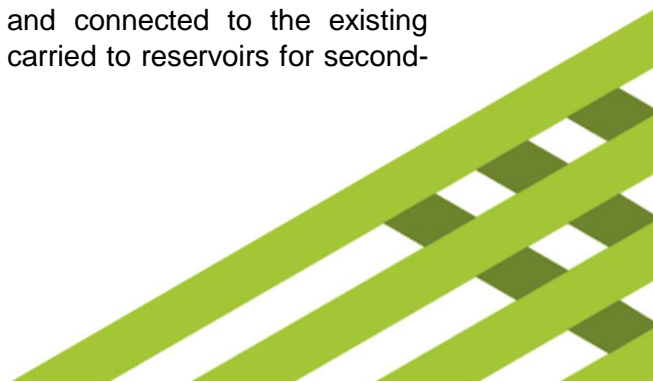
- equipment is in use.
 - Hoarding to be built around the site and maintained to maximise the reduction in noise levels to sensitive buildings.
 - Avoid unnecessary noise, such as leaving noisy idle machinery operating.
- 6.8 The increased traffic due to the proposed development also taking into account the activities from the previously approved planning applications, PA 07365/18 and PA 03967/19 which lie within the same complex which also form part of the ITS, are not envisaged to be significant.
- 6.9 Nonetheless, the development proposal should contribute towards alleviating traffic and congestion and consequently improving the baseline air quality by offering alternatives to private car use. This could be achieved via the provision of bicycle racks and shelters, motorcycles parking, electric car charging points/facilities and possibly creating/implementing incentives for car-pooling to mention a few examples. Such traffic abatement measures are in line with the recommendations and objectives of the National Transport Master Plan 2025 and are commended from an environmental point of view.

Energy Use and Amenities

- 6.10 Reducing energy demand has numerous environmental benefits. The ERA recommends that the design of the development takes into consideration sustainable measures such as:
- i. Skylights and large apertures, to provide additional natural light;
 - ii. Roof gardens and green walls, to provide additional shading thereby reducing solar heat gain as well as improving air quality by serving as a green area;
 - iii. Double/Triple-glazed apertures and exterior facade/aperture shading, to reduce solar heat gain;
 - iv. Ventilated cladding system and efficient air conditioning systems.

Sustainable or green architecture will also inevitably cut down costs relating mostly to reduced energy use which in principle should serve as an incentive for the developer to implement such measures. Moreover, the 'Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050' aims for low-carbon, carbon-neutral or carbon-positive, green, resilient and affordable construction solutions. Lastly, this is also perceived as mitigating visual and landscape impacts.

- 6.11 It is likely that the electrical load of the proposed development for dormitories and kitchens is greater when compared to the existing scenario, however the impact on the environment is not considered significant subject to the application of energy efficient features. In this regard, ERA recommends the installation of energy-efficient luminaries/lighting systems as well as renewable energy. Moreover, plans to install Building Applied Photovoltaics (BAPVs) on roofs of the proposed building/car-parks or any other renewable energy installations, are highly encouraged. Such measures are also in line with 'Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050' objective to transition towards low-carbon energy.
- 6.12 Storm-water drainpipes should be installed and connected to the existing network. The collected storm-water should be carried to reservoirs for second-class use.



Visual Impact and Landscape Character

- 6.13 In view of the nature and scale of the proposal; be it the existing building will largely remain unmodified externally, no significant impacts are envisaged in terms of visual amenity and landscape character.
- 6.14 In addition to the recommendations made in Paragraph 6.10 above, the ERA encourages the project proponent to dedicate spaces within the development site for the planting of endemic and indigneous trees. This measure is considered beneficial from an environmental as well as a social point of view in terms of social health and quality of life. This will contribute towards an better-quality visual and landscape character.

Screening Outcome

The above detailed EIA screening concludes that impacts of the development are unlikely to be significant to the point of warranting an EIA, in accordance with Regulation 15(3b) of the EIA Regulations 2017 (S.L. 549.46), as long as various mitigation measures are duly incorporated into the mainstream development consent mechanism and mitigated by means of conditions and specifications (e.g. approved documents) in the development permit.

III. ERA CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

The ERA has no objection to this proposal. The recommendations and mitigation measures listed in Section 6 of this screening document such as the recommended methods for reducing waste and energy use; harvesting of storm-water; providing means for alternative transport and implementing green infrastructure are to be duly considered.

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.

