

PA 03237/20

**PROPOSAL FOR UPGRADING OF AN EXISTING AIRCRAFT ACCESS WAY, AT
MALTA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, LUQA**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION STATEMENT



Version I: May 2020



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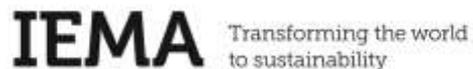
Proposal for the Upgrading of an Existing Aircraft Access Way Project Description Statement May 2020

Report for: **Malta Industrial Parks Ltd**

Revision Schedule

Rev	Date	Details	Written by:	Checked by:	Approved by:
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**Kappara Business Centre
113 Triq Birkirkara
San Gwann SGN 4197
MALTA**

Tel. / Fax: 21378172 - 77

**Email: info@adi-associates.com
Web: www.adi-associates.com**

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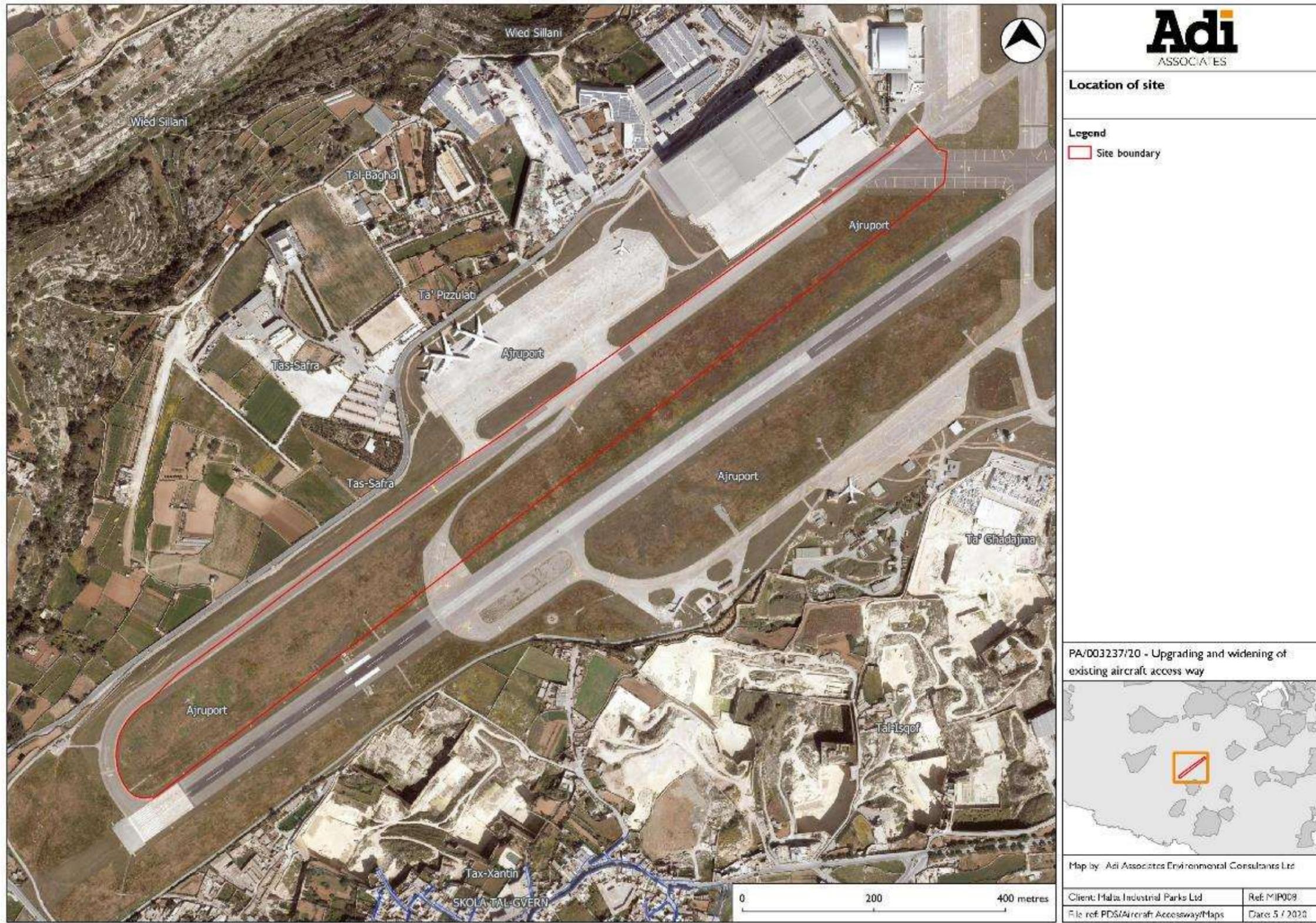
INTRODUCTION

1. This document describes a proposal for the upgrading of an existing aircraft access way (known as LIMA) within the Malta International Airport (see **Figure I**). The proposal is being taken forward in a Full Development Permit application submitted to the Planning Authority (PA) in January 2020 (under PA/03237/20).
2. The upgrading of the LIMA access way will allow for its use by wide-bodied aircraft (A350 family - code E), and specifically will allow these aircraft to access the new SR Technic hangar facility currently under construction (under PA/09961/18 and PA/09710/19). The upgrading works involve the widening of the access way in part, the lowering of the level of the access way, so as to match the level of the proposed apron in front of the new SR Technic hangar, and the improvement of the load-bearing capacity of the access way, to enable it to accommodate larger aircraft in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards. It is also envisaged to widen the link between the Lima access way and the secondary landing runway 05 - 23 (on the Mqabba side).
3. The applicant is Malta Industrial Parks Ltd, hereinafter referred to as 'the Applicant'; the project is hereinafter referred to as 'the Scheme'.

ALTERNATIVE SITE SELECTION

4. The Scheme involves the upgrading of an existing aircraft access way within the MIA complex, and in order to facilitate access to a new hanger facility which is currently under construction. As such, the Applicant did not consider any alternative sites.

Figure 1: Location of the Scheme Site



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Adi
ASSOCIATES

Location of site

Legend
 Site boundary

PA/003237/20 - Upgrading and widening of existing aircraft access way

Map by: Adi Associates Environmental Consultants Ltd

Client: Malta Industrial Parks Ltd	Ref: MIP009
File ref: PDSIAircraft Accessway/Maps	Date: 5 / 2020

THE SCHEME

LOCATION OF SCHEME SITE

5. The Scheme site is located within the Malta International Airport (MIA) complex, on the northwest corner, and adjacent to the secondary landing runway 05 - 23. The site lies within the Luqa Local Council administrative area.
6. In the South Malta Local Plan, the Scheme site is identified as lying within the MIA environs and within the area specifically identified for 'Safeguarding of Future Taxi-ways' and the 'Landing Clearing Zone'.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHEME SITE

7. The Scheme site occupies an area of approximately 64,000 m². **Figure 2** shows the 2016 aerial image of the Scheme site (extracted from the Planning Authority's GeoServer).

CHARACTER OF THE AREA AROUND THE SCHEME SITE

Land Uses

8. A detailed land use survey of the area surrounding the Scheme site was conducted in July 2019, in the preparation of the Project Description Statement for the new SR Technic hangar facility. The land uses are illustrated in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**.
9. The predominant land use is aviation-related. This includes the airfield itself, as well as the Lufthansa hangars and offices. The *Hal Farruġ* Area of Containment is located to the north of the MIA, across *Triq Hal Farruġ*. This accommodates the Polidano Group complex - batching plant, storage warehouses and open yards. The Montekristo Estate, which is a multi-use recreation park, is also located north of *Triq Hal Farruġ*.
10. The nearest urban settlement is Mqabba, to the south, where the Development Zone comes to within approximately 283 m (plan distance) of the Scheme site at its closest point. The Category 3 Small Rural Settlement of Tax-Xantin comes to within approximately 153 m (plan distance) of the Scheme site at its closest point.

Geology and Hydrology

11. The geological formation in the area of the Scheme site is the Lower Globigerina Limestone, (*Il-Franka*) – see **Figure 5**. The Scheme site is located approximately 475 m to the south of Wied Sillani, which exposes the underlying geological formation of Lower Coralline Limestone (Xlendi Member and Attard Member).
12. The Scheme site overlies the Mean Sea Level Aquifer and the southwest portion of the site lies within the Groundwater Safeguarding Zone (see **Figure 6**).

Natural and Cultural Heritage

13. **Figure 7** shows and natural and cultural heritage designations in the vicinity of the Scheme site. The Scheme site is located within a designated Bird Sanctuary; the designation encompasses the whole of the MIA complex. The Sanctuary was designated to prohibit hunting within the airfield and in its immediate surroundings.
14. Wied Sillani, which forms part of a wider valley system, has been proposed for environmental and landscape protection in the South Malta Local Plan (see **Figure 8**). The Local Plan has designated this valley system as a Valley Protection Zone and recommended the creation of an Environmental Management Plan for the area.
15. The area around the Scheme site is known for its cultural heritage and archaeological sensitivity. The closest scheduled feature to the Scheme site is the Grade A scheduled Tal-Wilġa Punico-Roman Tower, located approximately 65 m from the site on its southwest corner. The Scheme site encroaches within the buffer zone for this feature. The tower was constructed using large ashlar blocks; although only the eastern side of the tower has survived, it is currently in good condition.
16. The Local Plan identifies megalithic remains from the Temple Period and the Bronze Age located within the site (Class E level of importance¹) and a rock cut tomb and catacombs (also Class E) located on the southwestern boundary. There are also a number of Class E features in the immediate vicinity (including tombs). The area known as *Id-Debdiēba* just to the north of the Scheme site (within the site of the new SR Technic hangar currently under construction) was first excavated in 1914 by T. Ashby, T. Zammit and G. Despott². This pre-historic site included megaliths and the investigations also recorded Greek and Roman sherds, indicating that the site was also used in later periods.

¹ A Class E Level of Importance is assigned to sites that had been recorded in the past but have since been “lost”. These sites are afforded a buffer zone and any development or interventions on these sites requires careful monitoring by a qualified archaeologist under the guidance of the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage, in order to actively search for the previously recorded remains and any other archaeological / cultural features.

² Ashby, Zammit and Despott (1916) Excavations in Malta in 1914. *Man*. Vol. 16, pp. 1-6. Accessed on the 11th July 2019 [<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar//handle/123456789/10080>]

Figure 2: Aerial View of the Scheme Site (extracted from the 2016 aerial image on the PA's GeoServer)



Figure 3: Surrounding Land Uses

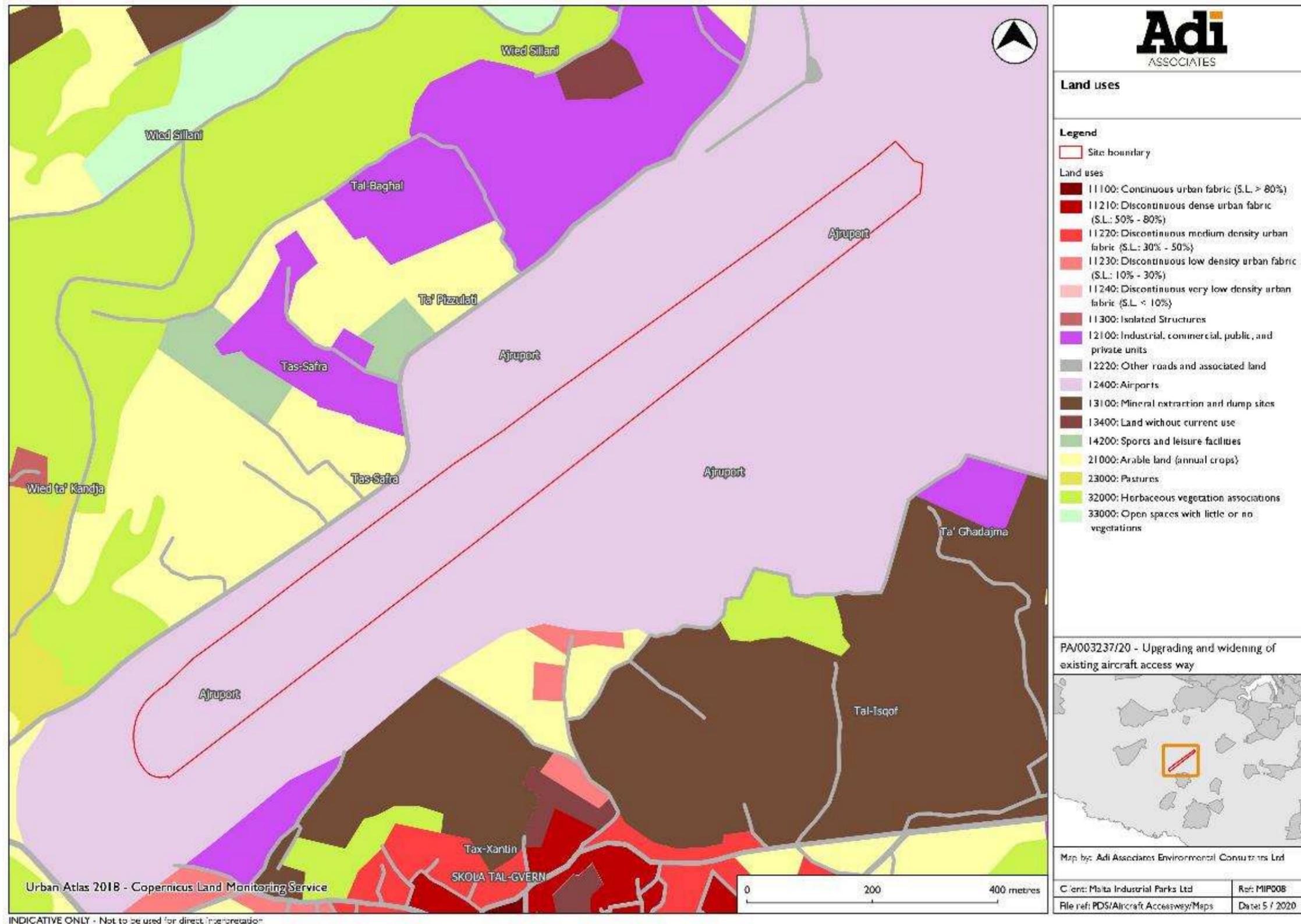


Figure 1: Images of the Surrounding Land Uses



Agricultural land



A LTM hangar

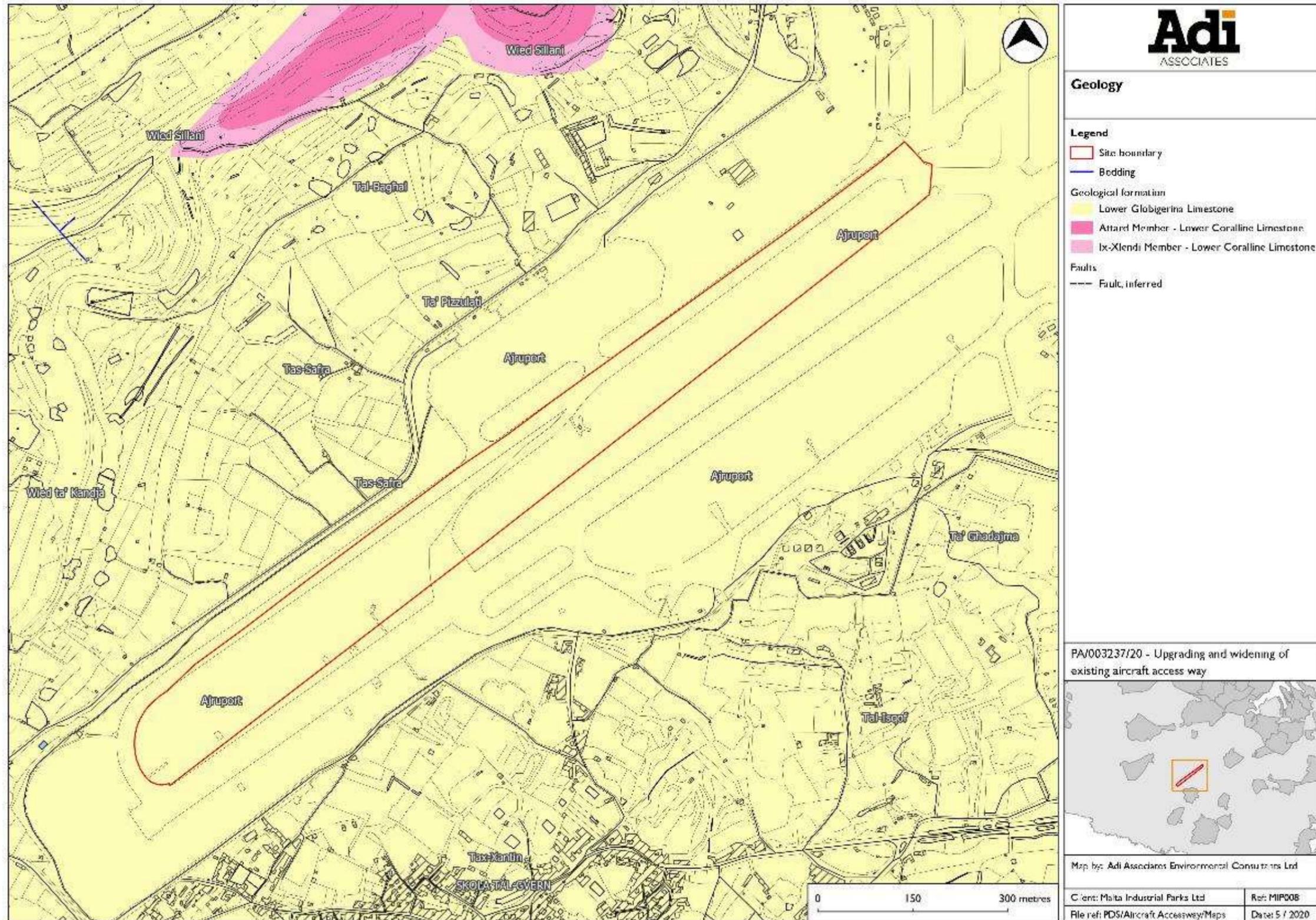


Industrial uses



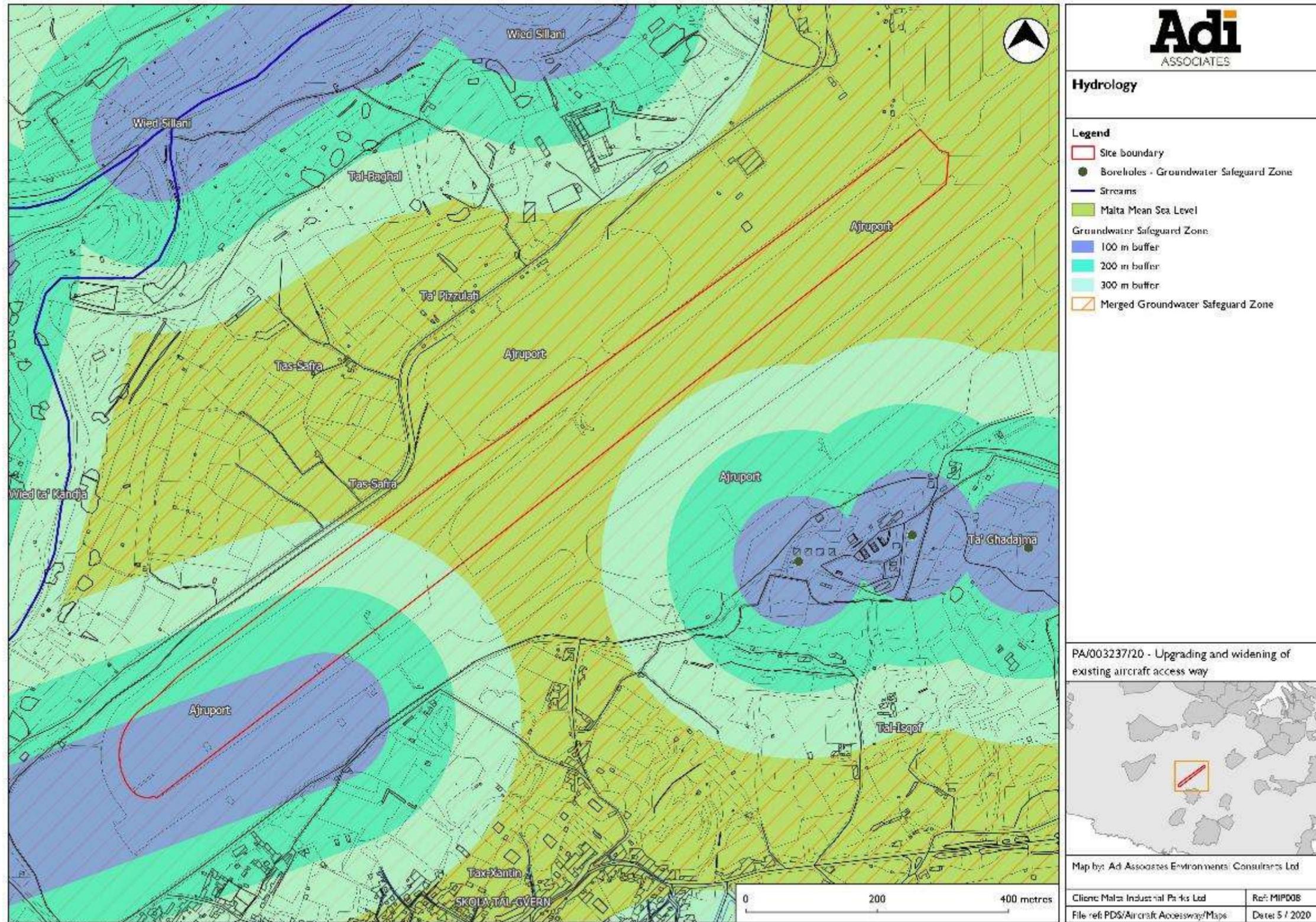
Mixed land uses: residences and garages

Figure 2: Geology of the Area



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Figure 3: Hydrology of the Area



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Figure 4: Natural and Cultural Heritage Designations

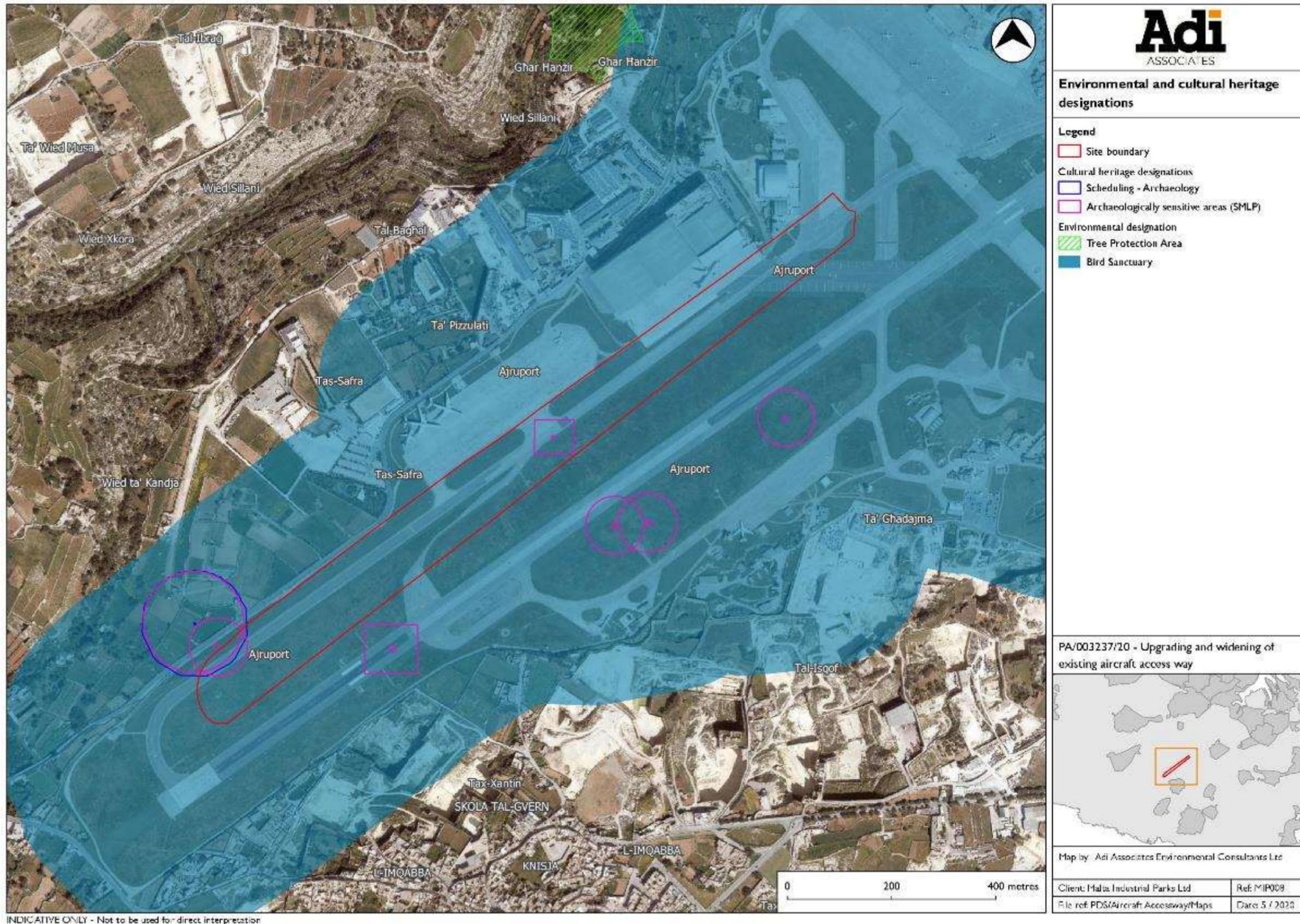
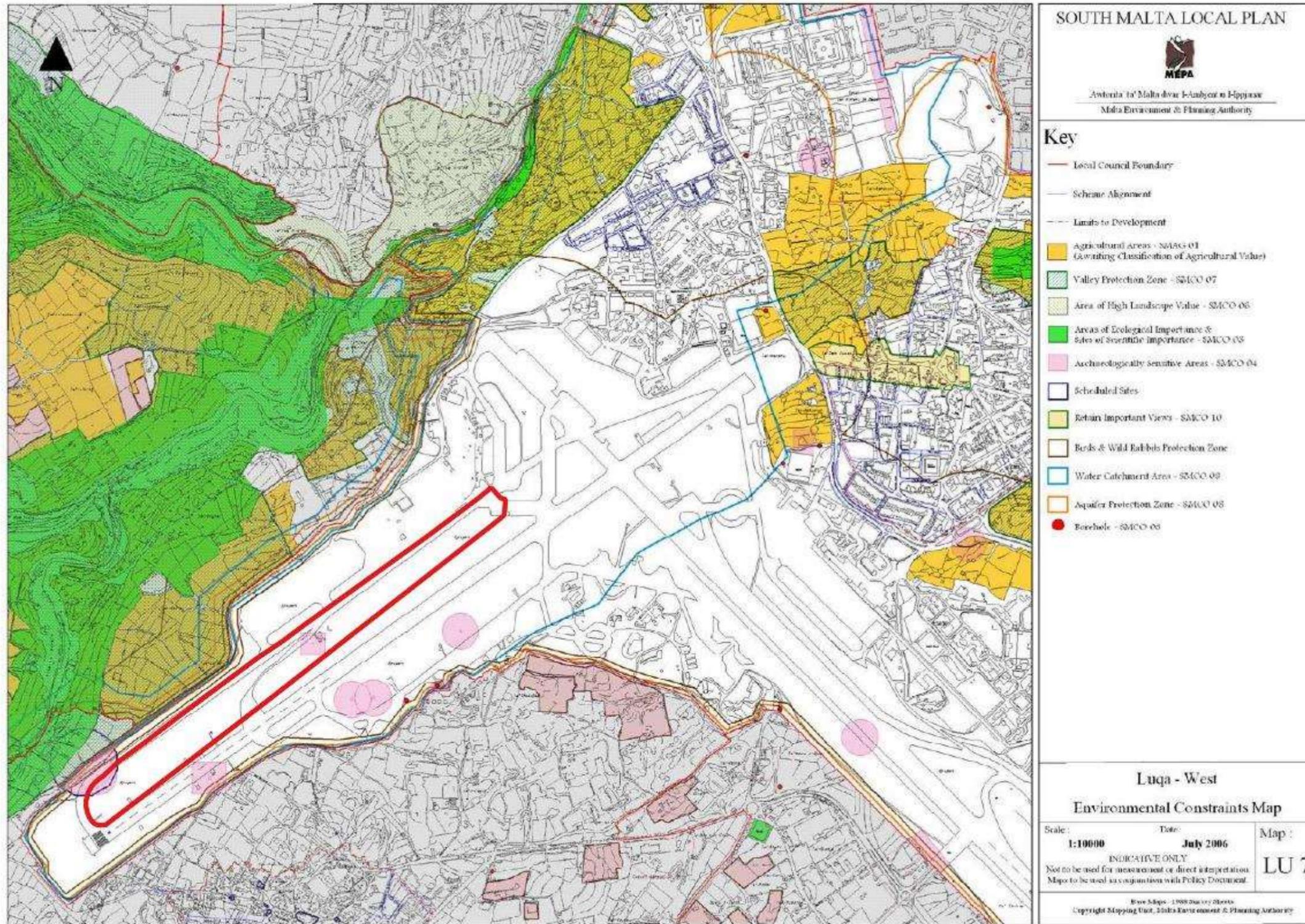


Figure 5: South Malta Local Plan Map



NOTE: Location of Scheme site shown by red boundary

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHEME

17. The Scheme involves the upgrading of the existing LIMA aircraft access way at MIA. **Figure 9** shows the Scheme layout. Specifically, the upgrading works involve:
- extension and widening of the access way in the northeastern section of the site (see **Figure 10**); notably, these works will be in the immediate vicinity of the site where megalithic remains had been identified and presumed to have survived though covered (Class E) in the Local Plan (see **Figure 7** above);
 - widening of the link to secondary landing runway 05 - 23 in the southwestern section of the site (see **Figure 11**);
 - lowering of the access way (by a maximum of approximately 1.2 m) to match the level of the apron in front of the new SR Technic hangar, which is currently under construction; and
 - improvement of the load-bearing capacity of the access way to enable it to accommodate larger aircraft.
18. The upgrading works will not have any implications for service networks in the area. There will also be no changes to the existing lighting regime in the area, nor to the existing storm water management system which is in place.

RESOURCES

Energy and Water

19. The Scheme has no implications for electricity and water use; there will be no additional demand on these resources.

Raw Materials

20. **Table I** identifies the main raw materials to be used in the upgrading works, and the estimated quantities of these materials. Notably, it is envisaged that all of the material generated by the excavation works (rock and loose material) will be used as backfill.

Table I: Estimated Raw Materials for Construction

Materials	Volume
Granular material (backfill)	60,000 m ³
Asphalt	13,000 m ³
Concrete	9,000 m ³

CONSTRUCTION

Construction Timing

21. The works will be undertaken in three phases, as follows:
- Phase 1: rebuilding of part of the access way in order to give temporary access to aircraft to the SR Technic hanger from the Mqabba side;
 - Phase 2: widening of the link to the secondary landing runway 05 – 23; and
 - Phase 3: linking of the upgraded LIMA access way with the SIERRA access way, located in front of the existing Lufthansa facility. This will allow aircraft from the north-east side of the airport to access the SR Technic hanger via the SIERRA access way.
22. It is envisaged that Phases 1 and 2 of the works will be completed by July 2020, when the new SR Technic hangar facility is expected to become operational. Phase 3 is envisaged to be completed within 12 months of the issue of the Full Development Permit.

Construction Machinery

23. The Scheme will involve the use of the following machinery: scarifiers; excavators; wheel loaders; trenchers; dump trucks; concrete mixers; pavers; and roller for unbound / bound materials (asphalt).

Construction Employment

24. It is envisaged that a maximum of approximately 20 persons will be employed on site during the construction phase of the Scheme.

WASTE

25. There will be a limited amount of waste produced during the construction phase of the Scheme. The upgrading works will involve the removal of approximately 50,000 m³ of soil and approximately 30,000 m³ of loose material and rock. It is envisaged that all of the latter will be reused on site (in the construction works). It is also envisaged to retain and reuse approximately 40,000 m³ of the soil to be removed. The remainder of the soil will be deposited at a facility as directed by the Department of Agriculture and ERA.
26. Given the nature of the Scheme, there will be no operational waste produced.

EMISSIONS

27. There will be some vehicle / plant emissions to air and noise emissions from vehicles / plant during the construction phase. There is also likely to be some dust arising from the construction site.

Figure 9: Scheme Layout

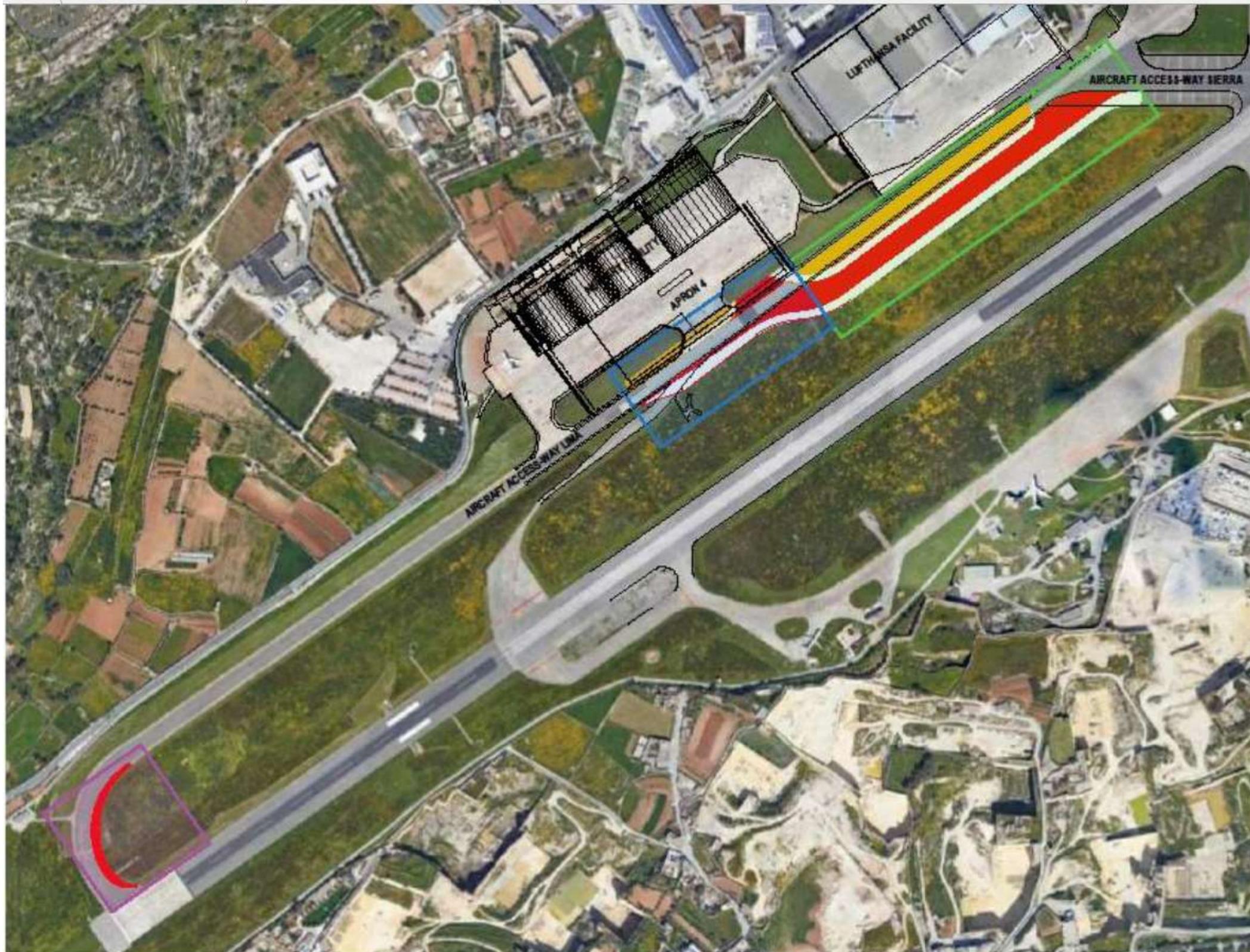
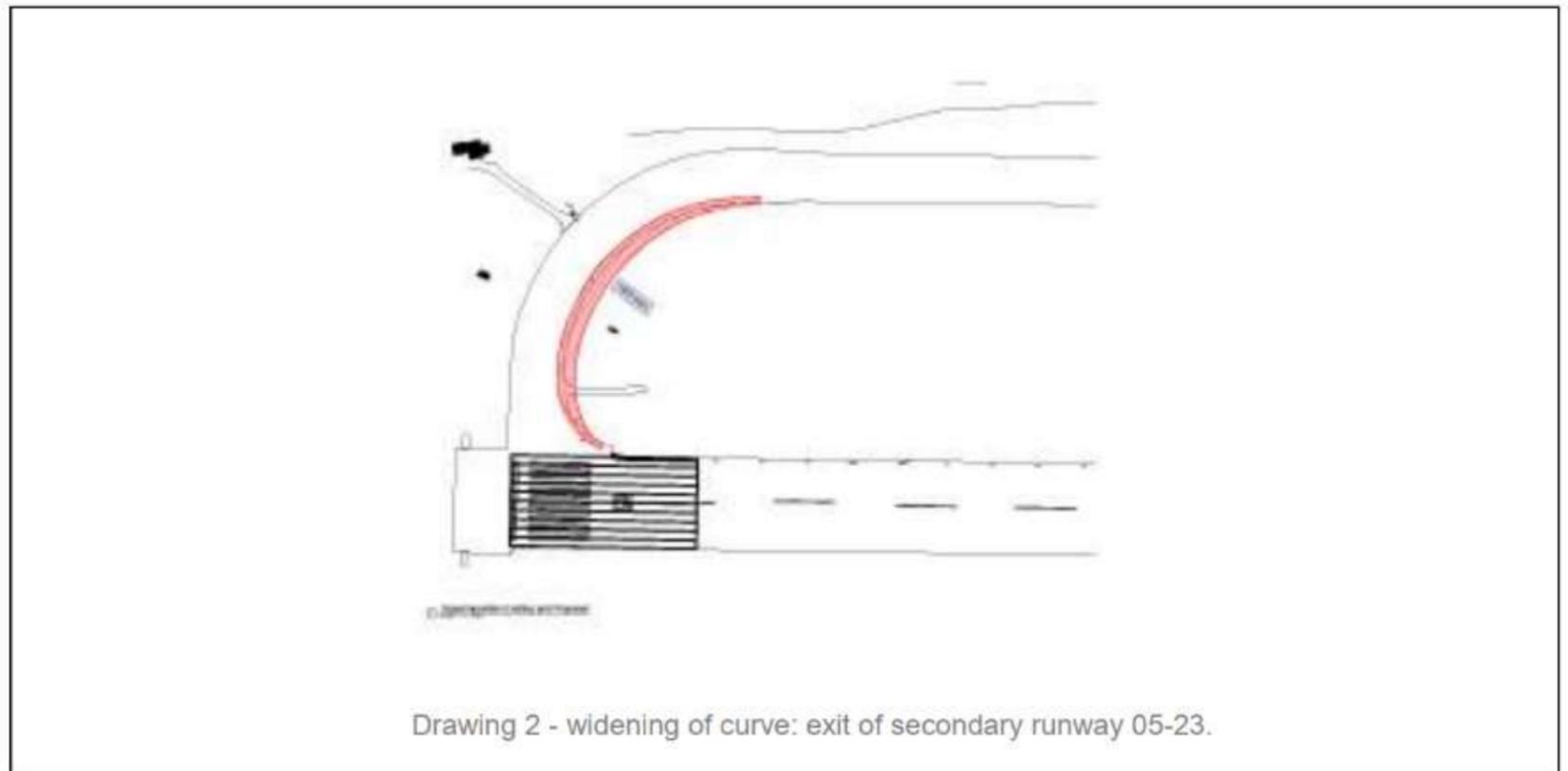


Figure 10: Extension and Widening of the Access Way



Figure 11: Widening of the Link to the Secondary Landing Runway



POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

28. Environmental impacts can be negative as well as positive and their assessment is important so as to better define the effects that a development may have on its receiving environment. The determination of the magnitude and significance of the impacts is normally identified and assessed through the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. At this stage in the process, a preliminary list of environmental impacts can be identified.
29. The list identifies those impacts that are considered likely to be significant. Given the nature of the Scheme, its location within the MIA complex, and the development context, it is considered unlikely that there will be significant impacts in respect of landscape and visual amenity. The impacts in relation to construction waste are also considered not to be significant, where the primary construction wastes (excavated material and soil) will be predominantly reused on the site.
30. The significant impacts arising from the Scheme are considered to be:
- **Impacts on cultural heritage and archaeology**, from the construction of the Scheme

The Scheme site is located within an archaeologically sensitive area and a number of features are known to have existed within the site or in its immediate vicinity. These include megalithic remains that had been discovered within the site and a rock cut tomb and catacombs excavated at the southwestern boundary. All these features have been 'lost' over the years but may still be surviving *in situ*. For this reason, these cultural heritage features were assigned a Class E level of importance in the South Malta Local Plan, which means that any development in this location will need to be carefully monitored so as to actively search for these 'lost' features. Notably, the upgrading works in the northeastern section of the site will be in the immediate vicinity of the megalithic remains. There is also the potential for the unearthing of further unrecorded archaeological artefacts during the excavation works. Similar projects in other parts of the MIA unearthed significant cultural remains.

- **Impacts on the geo-environment**, from the excavation works

As mentioned, the Scheme will involve the removal of approximately 50,000 m³ of soil and approximately 30,000 m³ of loose material and rock. However, it is envisaged that all of the loose material and rock and 40,000 m³ (80%) of the soil will be reused on site. The remaining soil will be deposited at a facility as directed by the Department of Agriculture and ERA.

- **Impacts arising from construction activities**, in relation to noise, vibration, dust emissions, and surface water run-off

The potential impacts arising during construction are likely to be short-term and temporary. There are no residential properties in the area immediately around the Scheme site. Nevertheless, there will be the need to minimise disturbance from construction activities on those working in the area.

MITIGATION PROPOSALS

31. Preliminary potential mitigation measures associated with the identified impacts arising from the Scheme include:
- Careful archaeological monitoring of the works / pre-works investigation in the areas assigned as a Class E Archaeological Site in the South Malta Local Plan to actively search for the previously recorded features. Depending on the finds, recording and/or re-design may be required, as may be directed by the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage;
 - Careful archaeological monitoring of the clearing / excavation works to ensure against the loss or / damage to any unrecorded archaeological artefacts that may be uncovered during the works;
 - Ensuring the adoption of best practice environmental measures throughout construction in accordance with the Construction Management Regulations and careful attention to measures in the Construction Management Plan (CMP) for mitigating noise, vibration, odours, and dust from the construction works, adherence to the construction site regulations, and for the implementation of appropriate monitoring regimes throughout the construction phase to mitigate impacts; and
 - Compliance with all relevant waste management regulations, including for contaminated / hazardous wastes, and the adoption of best practice in relation to waste management.