

Environmental Impact Assessment

Screening according to Schedule III of S.L. 549.46

Appropriate Assessment

Screening, in terms of S.L. 549.44

ERA Reference no.: EA/00019/20

PA Reference no.: DN/00357/20

Project Title: Construction of a new logistic centre (Class 6A) and a new reconstituted stone factory (Class 5B). Including also the construction of two new security rooms at the entrances to the site.

Location: Site at HHF059, Qasam Industrijali Hal-Far, Birzebbuga

Screening date: June 2020

I. BACKGROUND

1. Outline of Proposal

- 1.1 The proposal includes a new reconstituted stone factory (Class 5B), supporting facilities in the form of a logistic centre (storage Class 6A) and a small extension to the existing factory (Class 5B). The existing factory, with a floor area of circa 4,500 m², is a marble factory, whereby the proposed extensions will support the current activities (Figure 1, 1a, 1b, 1c). In total, the built-up area would increase to circa 7,800 m².
- 1.2 The proposed buildings would be constructed by means of steel structures and/or pre-cast concrete to reduce the extent of the works on site and the construction timeframes.
- 1.3 During the construction phase, rock-cutting would take place, whereby excavation up to a depth of 0.45 m is required for the building foundations.
- 1.4 With respect to traffic generation, the project is expected to generate an increase of 16 vehicle trips daily (AADT).

Annex I

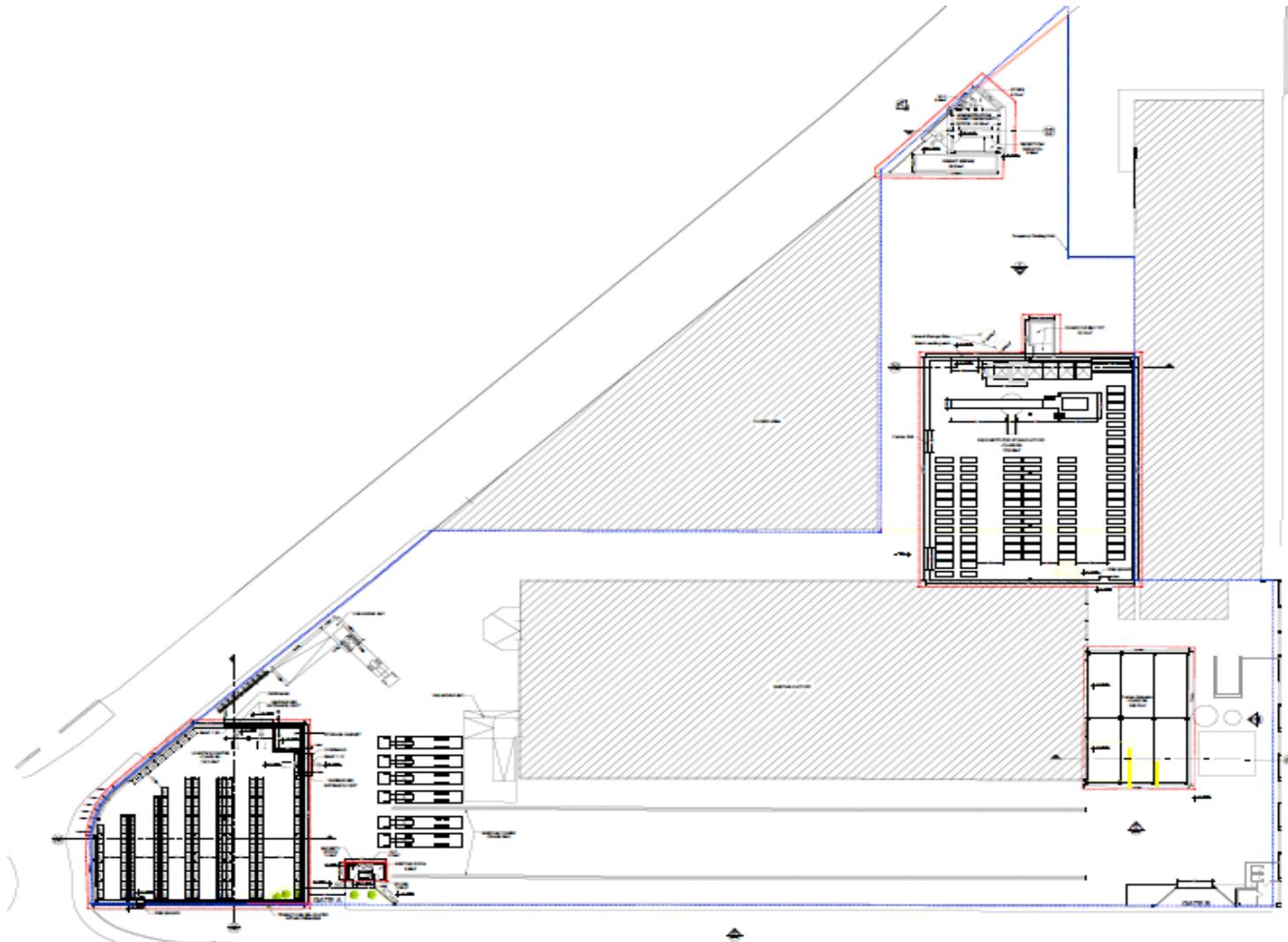


Figure 1. Master Plan (Source: E-Apps, document DN/00357/20 - 1b).

Annex I

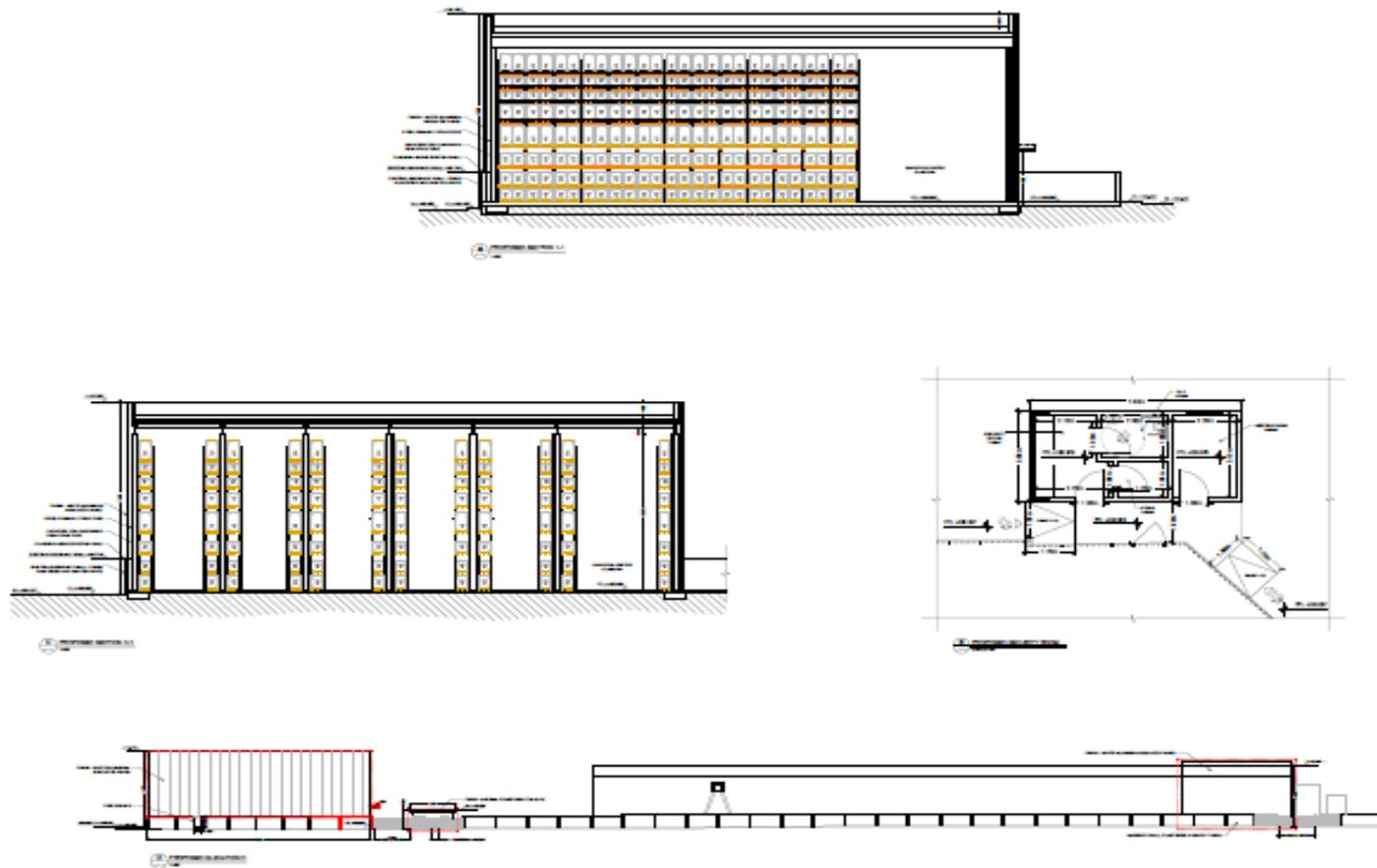


Figure 1a. Proposed Street Elevations, Sections and Proposed Security Room Plan (Source: E-Apps, document DN/00357/20 - 1c).

Annex I

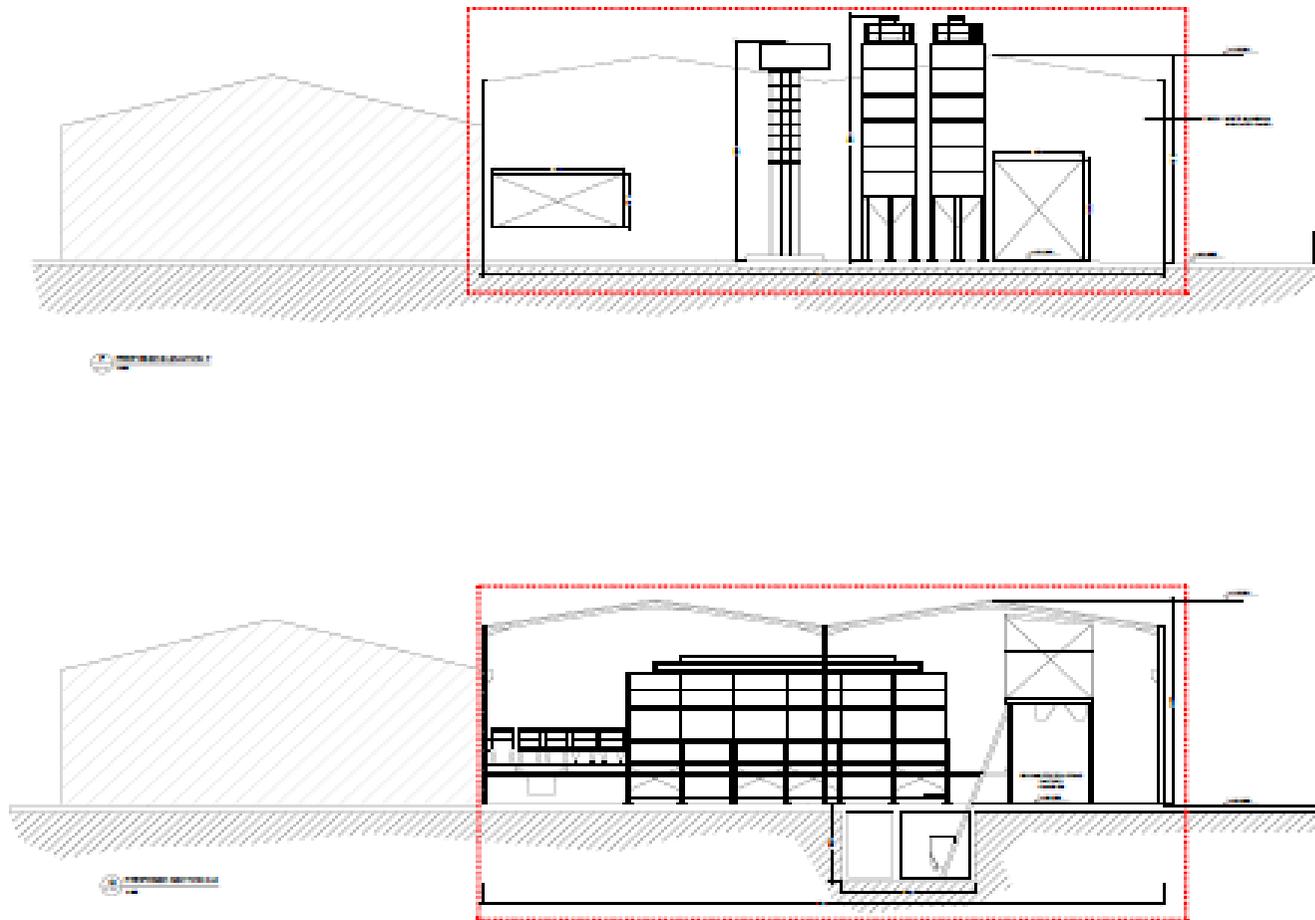


Figure 1b. Proposed Sections and Internal Elevation (Source: E-Apps, document DN/00357/20 - 1d).

Annex I

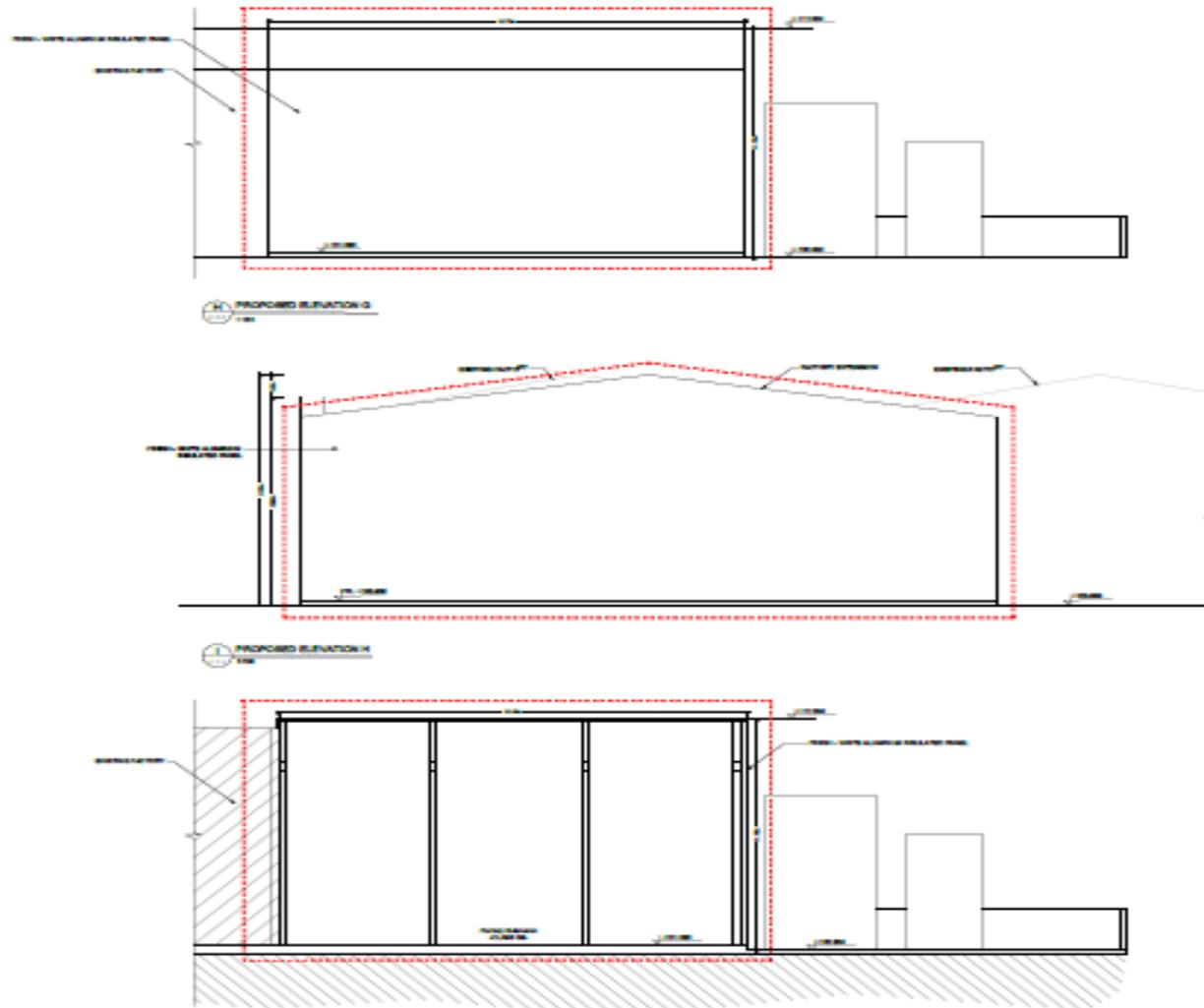


Figure 1c. Proposed Section and Internal Elevation (Source: E-Apps, document DN/00357/20 - 1e)

2. Site context

- 2.1 The site is located, as per South Malta Local Plan Map HF 01, within the Hal Far industrial zone (Figure 2). The industrial zone is regulated by policy SMHF01, which in general encourages industrial uses. The site is circa 18,000 m² and currently has a built-up area of 4,500 m², which includes a marble factory.
- 2.2 The surrounding land uses within the immediate vicinity of the site include industry, agriculture, recreational areas, sports facilities, parking provision, small farmhouses, and a residential building.
- 2.3 Furthermore, the site is approximately 140 meters away from the nearest limit of MT0000024 (Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Ir-Ramla ta-Ċirkewwa sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa) – Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and MT0000033 (Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Wied Moqbol sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa) – Special Protected Area (SPA), designed through the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, 2016 (S.L. 549.44).



Figure 2. Aerial photograph of the site (Source: PDS).



Figure 3. Aerial photograph of the site in relation to the Special Area of Conservation (SAC, MT0000024 - Rđumijiet ta' Malta: Ir-Ramla tac-Ċirkewwa sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa) and Special Protected Area (SPA, MT0000033 - Rđumijiet ta' Malta: Wied Moqbol sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa) (colored in blue) (Source: PA Geoserver)

3. Case history

3.1 This site has been previously subject to the following Planning applications:

- PA/03104/92 – *To erect marble factory*. Application approved.
- PA/02813/94 – *Construction of factory for the production of marble slabs and other marble products*. Application approved.
- DN/00653/15 – *Installation of PV panels of roof*. Application approved.
- DN/0768/15 – *Erection of boundary wall and formation of new factory access and gantry crane*. Application approved.

4. Screening Criteria

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

The proposed development falls under the scope of *Schedule I, Category II of the EIA Regulations, 2017 (S.L. 549.46)*, namely *Section 9.0.2.4. – Rock processing plant, not within an existing operational quarry, and not covered by Category I*. Therefore, the proposal was also screened in terms of the EIA Regulations.

4.2 Appropriate Assessment Screening (*citations refer to S.L. 549.44, except where otherwise specified*):

In view of the location of the proposal adjacent the protected area MT0000024 - Rđumijiet ta'

Malta: Ir-Ramla taċ-Ċirkewwa sa Il-Ponta ta' Bengħisa (Special Area of Conservation (SAC) of International Importance) and MT0000033 - Rđumijiet ta' Malta: Wied Moqbol sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa (Special Protected Area (SPA)), the proposal has been screened in terms of Regulation 19 of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, 2016 (S.L. 549.44).

With respect to the SAC, the following Annex I listed habitats are present along Wied Żnuber: Habitat 5330 (Thermo-Mediterranean and pre-desert scrub), priority Habitat 3170 (Mediterranean temporary ponds), Habitat 9320 (*Olea* and *Ceratonia* forests), Habitat 1240 (Vegetated sea cliffs of the Mediterranean coasts with endemic *Limonium* spp.), Habitat 5430 (Endemic phrygas of the *Euphorbio-Verbascion*), Habitat 8210 (Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation).

With respect to the SPA, the following Annex I listed species are of importance: *Calonectris diomedea* (Cory's Shearwater) and *Puffinus yelkouan* (Yelkouan Shearwater).

5. Documents used for screening

- a. Project Description Statement (PDS) sent via email directly to ERA by the Architect on 16th May 2020;
- b. Docs 1b to 1e from EApps;
- c. Aerial photograph of the site in relation to the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protected Area (SPA) (colored in blue), Geoserver Planning Authority.

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 use

- 6.1 Given that the proposed development involves industrial processes and is located within an established industrial zone, regulated by policy SMHF01, dominated by industrial uses, no significant impacts are envisaged.

Waste generation

- 6.2 In terms of both the construction and operational phase, no significant impacts from the proposed development have been envisaged as long as any construction and demolition waste generated during the course of this development is managed in accordance with the Waste Regulations (S.L.549.63).

Noise and vibrations

- 6.3 With respect to the generation of noise and vibrations, the proposed development is not expected to lead to any significant impacts during the construction phase, in view of the nature of the development and the surrounding industrial area, as long as the works adhere to the minimum specifications set out in the Environmental Management Construction Site Regulations, 2007 (S.L. 552.09).
- 6.4 During operations, the proposed development is also not expected generate any significant impacts on sensitive receptors in view that the site is located within the already established industrial zone of Hal Far.

Air Quality

- 6.5 In terms of air quality, no significant impacts are envisaged during the construction phase, when taking into consideration the nature of the development and the surrounding industrial area, as long as the works adhere to the minimum specifications set out in the Environmental Management Construction Site Regulations, 2007 (S.L. 552.09).
- 6.6 During operations, no impacts on air quality are expected either, given that the proposed development will be generating merely 16 additional daily vehicle trips, which is not considered to be significant.

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.

7. Appropriate Assessment screening (in terms of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations, S.L.549.44)

- 7.1 The project is located within an industrial zone which is located near the protected area MT0000024 - Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Ir-Ramla taċ-Ċirkewwa sa Il-Ponta ta' Bengħisa (Special Area of Conservation (SAC) of International Importance) and MT0000033 - Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Wied Moqbol sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa (Special Protected Area (SPA)).
- 7.2 With respect to the SAC, the following Annex I listed habitats are present along Wied Żnuber: Habitat 5330 (Thermo-Mediterranean and pre-desert scrub), priority Habitat 3170 (Mediterranean temporary ponds), Habitat 9320 (Olea and Ceratonia forests), Habitat 1240 (Vegetated sea cliffs of the Mediterranean coasts with endemic Limonium spp.), Habitat 5430 (Endemic phrygas of the Euphorbio-Verbascion), Habitat 8210 (Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation).
- 7.3 As stated above, the project is also located near MT0000033 - Rdumijiet ta' Malta: Wied

Moqbol sal-Ponta ta' Bengħisa (SPA), which offer cliffs and extensive rocky areas, being an ideal habitat for two species of sea-bird populations, namely a population of ca. 1000-1500 pairs of Cory's Shearwater, *Calonectris diomedea* (Annex I, Birds Directive) and a population of ca. 100-150 pairs of Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* (Annex I, Birds Directive). The valleys found within the cliffs are important as feeding and resting places for migratory and wintering bird species.

- 7.4 Whilst lighting and runoff originating from the site may be relevant to the protected site, notably the valley, noting the current uses of the site and the fact that project is on a site that is well within the established industrial zone and is physically separated and 'hidden' from the Natura 2000 sites and their habitats by other existing buildings and existing wide roads that are located in between, such environmental disturbances originating from the site per se are not expected to reach the Natura 2000 site to any significant extent.
- 7.5 In this regard, the above screening concludes that the proposal is not expected to have any significant impacts on the integrity of the habitats, species and the Natura 2000 site as a whole, as long as no material runoff reaches the valley, and various preventive and/or mitigation measures are duly incorporated into the mainstream development consent mechanism and addressed by means of conditions and specifications (e.g. approved documents) in the development permit.
- 7.6 Subject to the above, no further assessment in terms of Regulations 19 of S.L. 549.44 is required.

8. Permitting requirements

- 8.1 In order to determine whether the proposal may qualify for an MCP/Environmental Permit Registration and/or a Nature Permit, the below required information and updated plans/section are to be provided. In this regard, the Applicant/architect is requested to immediately contact the Environmental Permitting Unit (industrial.applications@era.org.mt) to discuss the requirements below:
- i. Kindly specify whether there shall be any combustion plants. If in the affirmative, kindly provide details and specifications in this regards, including the type of combustion plant and its rated thermal input in MWth. Applicant is to also specify the type, quantity and location of fuel storage associated with the specific combustion plant and provide further information showing how all bulk oil/ liquid fuel storage tanks (including those built-in) shall be provided with an adequately designed bund system with an impermeable base and walls. The capacity of the bund shall be a minimum of 110% of the largest tank within the bund or 25% of the total capacity of all the tanks within the bund, whichever is greater. All filling and off-take points shall be located within the bund.
 - ii. Kindly clarify whether any inert waste material is accepted on site for recycling purposes in order to be used for production on site.
 - iii. Block plan in conventional colours showing any trees to be intervened upon including their scientific name.

- iv. Close-up photos of such individual trees to be intervened upon.



III. ERA CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

Following screening of this proposal, ERA concludes that the environmental impacts from the proposed 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), and no further assessment in terms of Regulation 19 of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.44) is required, as long as the above ERA requirements are addressed, and 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.

ERA requests that the conditions annexed with this consultation reply (Annex II) are duly included as an approved document in the permit.

Disclaimer

The above comments are being issued without prejudice to any additional issues which are regulated by ERA through any relevant environmental permitting and, or compliance/enforcement mechanisms, as well as to any environmental considerations that may be beyond the scope of the application under consideration.