

# Annex I

## Environmental Impact Assessment

### Schedule III

(Screening according to S.L. 549.46)

**ERA Reference no.:** EA/00035/19

**PA Reference no.:** PA/04576/19

**Project Title:** Relocation of kerbside fuel station MRA/KPRS/105 from Pjazza San Nikola - Siggiewi to a site on Triq Mons. Mikiel Azzopardi - Siggiewi and construction of servicing garage at basement, ancillary office and shop Class 4B, car wash, ATM and landscaping at ground floor level.

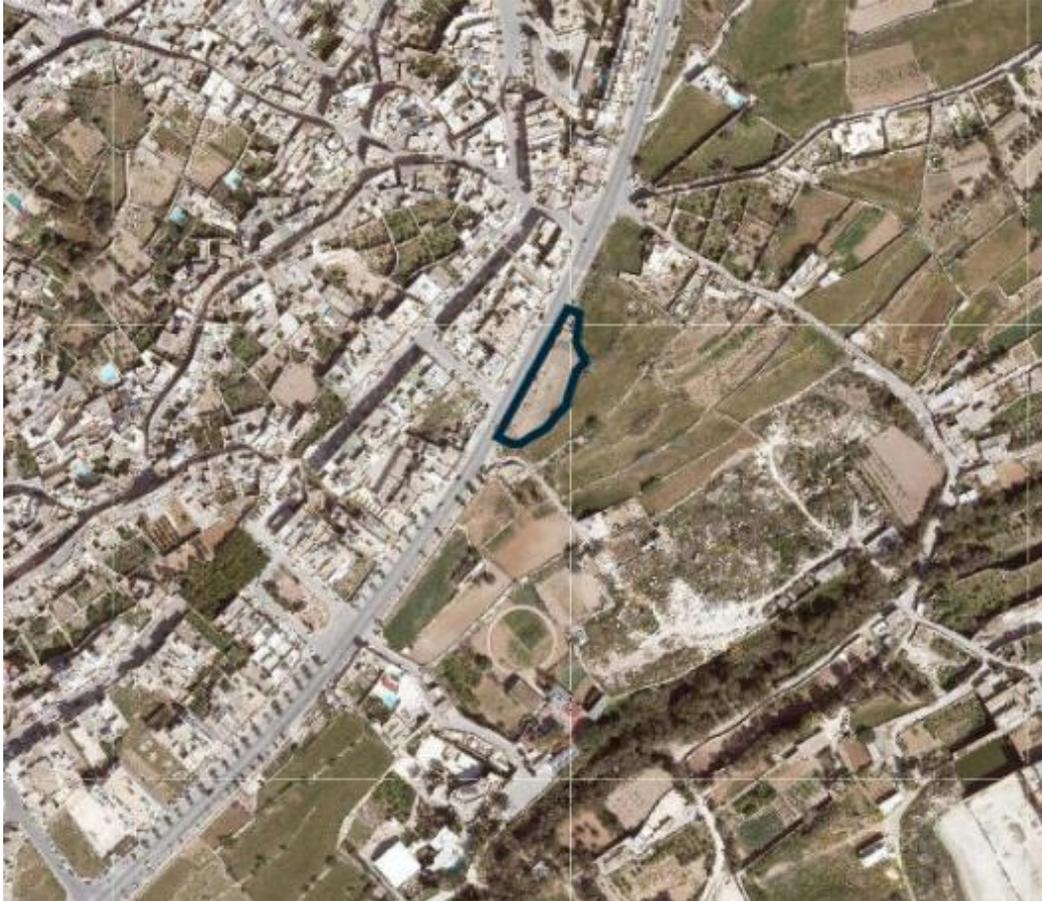
**Location:** Triq Mons. Mikiel Azzopardi, Siggiewi

**Screening date:** June 2019

---

#### 1. Outline of proposal

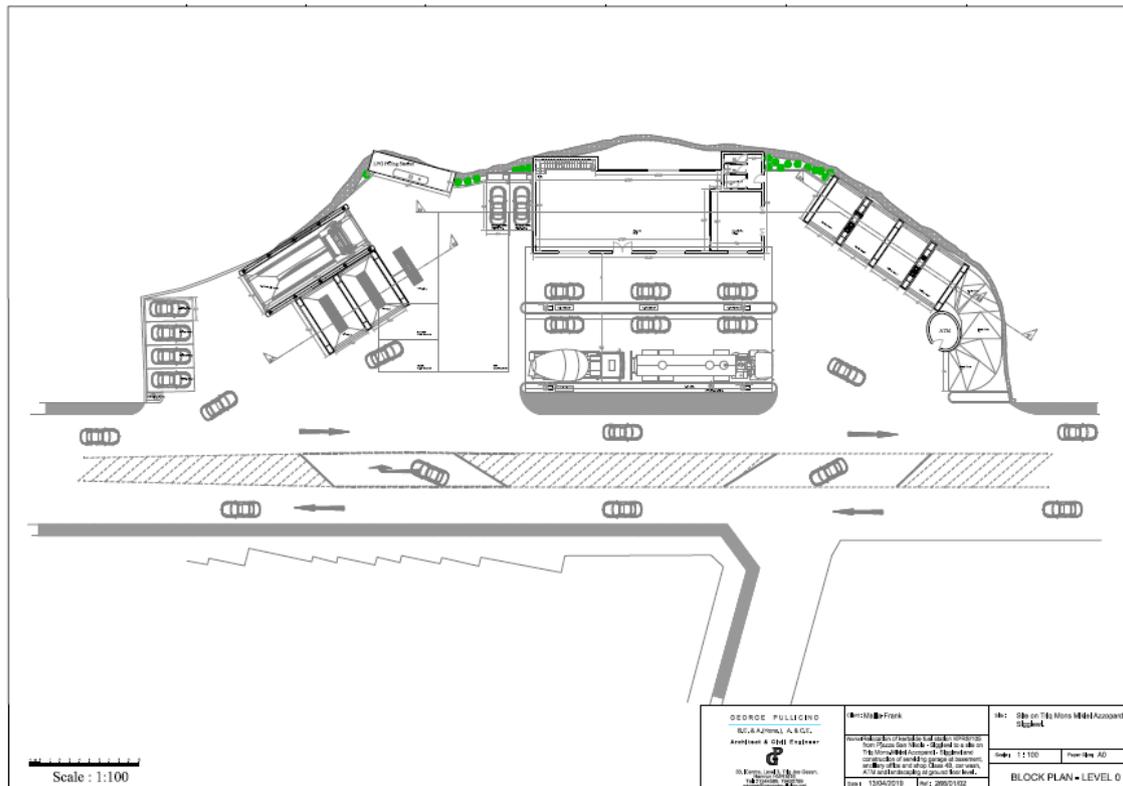
- 1.1 The proposed development is for the relocation of an existing kerbside fuel station at Pjazza San Nikola - Siggiewi to an ODZ site at Triq Mons. Mikiel Azzopardi - Siggiewi. The proposal also envisages an enlargement of the facility to include the construction of a new fuel servicing station including four car wash facilities, two electric charging stations, class 4B shop, ATM, tyre service vulcanizer, office/servicing garage, parking spaces, WC, four separate drying areas two underground tanks for fuel storage and reservoirs. The current facility covers an area of c. 160 m<sup>2</sup> whereas the proposed development would occupy an area of circa 1,700 m<sup>2</sup> (Figures 1-3).



**Figure 1:** Map showing the location of the proposed new fuel servicing station (Source: *PA Geoserver*).



**Figure 2:** Map showing close-up location of the proposed new fuel servicing station (Source: *PA Geoserver*).



**Figure 3:** Site plan of the proposed fuel service station (Source: E-apps PA4576/19/1c).

## 2. Site context

- 2.1 The proposed site is located at Triq Mons. Mikiel Azzopardi, Siggiewi, Malta and lies Outside Development Zone (ODZ) on the outskirts of Siggiewi. The site is currently an agricultural field with some citrus, pomegranate and olive trees and a small built structure to the north of the site and is surrounded by other agricultural areas.
- 2.2 Additionally, the site lies within an Agricultural Area (SMAG 01) and Valley Protection Zone (SMCO 07) as designated by the South Malta Local Plan as per Map SI5. In addition, the proposed area also lies within an area which requires an Environmental Management Plan for Wied Xkora as per the Siggiewi Policy Plan (SMCO 09, Map SI 1). The site falls within the 100m buffer zone of the groundwater safeguard area.

## 3. Documents used for screening:

- a. Project Description Statement (PDS) at doc. PA/04576/19/16b, which was referred to ERA on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (PA/04576/19/39a),
- b. Other documents on e-apps (docs 1a – 1i; 12b – 12c; 13b; and 31a).

#### **4. Site history**

No other development applications are known in relation to the site.

#### **5. Overall Assessment**

- 5.1 The existing fuel station consists of a single pump island with five fuel pump stations whereas the new fuel station being proposed will consist of one pump island with a total of six fuel pumps which will supply unleaded petrol and Diesel, another separate dispenser that will supply autogas, four car wash facilities, two electric charging stations, class 4B shop, ATM, tyre service vulcanizer, office/servicing garage, parking spaces, WC, four separate drying areas, two underground tanks for fuel storage and reservoirs as outlined in Paragraph 1.2. The proposed development is therefore not simply a like-with-like relocation but a major expansion of commercial use onto ODZ land. The proposed enlargement and relocation of the fuel station would result in the uptake of 1700 m<sup>2</sup> of undeveloped agricultural land.
- 5.2 The construction of a fuel station on this site would introduce a dominant urban development which is incongruous within the rural characteristics of the surrounding rural environment. This area is in fact identified for its agricultural value in the South Malta Local Plan (SMLP) through Map SI5 and protected through the provisions of policy SMAG 01 which states “only buildings, structures and uses essential to the needs of agriculture will be permitted on condition that it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of MEPA that they will not adversely affect water supplies, soil and landscape, and accord with all other policies within this Local Plan” (SMLP, 2006:44). Hence, the proposal is in direct conflict with the Local Plan’s designation and corresponding policies for the area, thereby prejudicing the effectiveness of such zoning as an environmental safeguard. Such type of development should be restricted to designated sub-urban zones such as Areas of Containment identified in the Local Plan.
- 5.3 In addition, the proposed fuel station and associated facilities in the area are likely to open up the outer side of Triq Mons. Mikiel Azzopardi to additional ODZ development pressures. Furthermore, the proposed development also runs counter to Thematic Objective 1.10 and to Rural Objective 4 of the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development in that the proposal is not considered legitimate or necessary within the rural area. This inherent conflict between the development and its siting cannot be satisfactorily addressed through further studies.
- 5.4 ERA is also concerned about the further loss of undeveloped rural land to accommodate yet another significantly enlarged fuel station ODZ, thereby contributing to the cumulative environmental impact caused by the numerous ad hoc proposals for such petrol station developments.
- 5.5 In view of the above points, ERA considers this proposal as objectionable from an environmental point of view.

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

- 6.1 The proposed development falls under the scope of Schedule I Category II Section 10.0.2.4 (Development or extension of fuel servicing stations, including petrol stations and gas distribution stations) of the EIA Regulations, 2017 (S.L. 549.46).
- 6.2 However, the review of the PDS has identified a number of major environmental concerns such as rural land uptake and in-principle conflicts with the site's ODZ zoning. These concerns, as already summarised in section 5 above, cannot be addressed properly through detailed studies.

## **7. Permitting requirements**

Without prejudice to the above overriding objection, the proposal would qualify for an Environmental Permit.

## **8. ERA Conclusion**

### ***Conclusion and recommended way forward***

- a. ERA considers that there is no valid justification for the further loss of undeveloped rural land and associated environmental impacts to accommodate even further development of petrol stations beyond the development zone boundary. There is also concern regarding the cumulative environmental impact caused by the numerous ad hoc proposals for petrol stations currently being proposed on ODZ land. Whilst the proposed development would qualify for an EIA as per the EIA Regulations, 2017 (S.L. 549.46), this proposal *per se* would still leave this strategic-level environmental concern unresolved. In this regard, ERA objects to the said development
- b. Given that the Fuel Service Station Policy (April 2015) is currently under review the proposal is also considered premature pending the coming into force of the updated Fuel Service Station Policy.
- c. Without prejudice to the above, should the proposal be considered favourably by the Planning Authority against ERA's objection, the applicant is to be informed that:
  - i. As mentioned in Section 5.1, the proposed development would qualify for an EIA, whilst noting that such EIA studies would still leave the critical environmental concerns indicated in Section 5 unresolved;
  - ii. The proposal would qualify for an Environmental Permit and thus the applicant would need to contact ERA's Environmental Permitting Unit ([industrial.applications@era.org.mt](mailto:industrial.applications@era.org.mt)) to discuss further requirements and submissions including decommissioning-related aspects;

- iii. Additional environmental-related conditions may need to be imposed.

---

***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.*