

Environmental Impact Assessment

Screening according to Schedule III of S.L. 549.46

ERA Reference:	EA/00013/21
PA Reference no.:	PA/03632/09
Project Title:	Flats, penthouses and basement parking.
Location:	Site At, N/S in Triq It- Tuffieh, Triq Il- Langas and, Triq Censu Muscat, Naxxar.
Screening date:	June 2021

I. BACKGROUND

1. Outline of Proposal

1.1 The proposed development involves the construction of five residential blocks, with a total of 278 residential units, 346 garages and 114 parking spaces at basement level. In addition, the two landscaped areas which are being proposed will be publicly accessible. The maximum height of the proposed buildings is 7 storeys, on all street frontages, with the top floor being recessed for blocks A, B and C (see Figures 1-2).

1.2 The configuration of the proposed residential blocks is summarised in the PDS as follows (see Figure 1-2 and Table 1):

- *Block A* - Corner block situated at the NW corner of the site, fronting Triq Censu Muscat. The height of this block is terraced up from five floors to six floors and penthouse from street level (5,149 m² gross floor area);
- *Block B* - Fronting Triq Censu Muscat. The height of this block is terraced up from five floors to six floors and penthouse from street level (4,624 m² gross floor area);
- *Block C* - The height of this block is terracing up from five floors to six floors and penthouse from street level (8,573 m² gross floor area);
- *Block D* - Corner site, having frontage on the strategic open space within the site. The height of this block is terraced up from four floors to six floors plus penthouse (10,625 m² gross floor area); and
- *Block E* - Fronting the strategic open space within the site. The height of this block is terracing up from four floors up to six floors plus penthouse (5,871 m² gross floor area).

- 1.3 The total gross floor area of the five residential blocks is 34,844 m². In addition, the proposed development also includes parking provision over three basement levels, each with a gross floor area of 9,500 m² (total gross floor area of 28,500 m²). This brings the total gross floor area of the entire development to 63,342 m².
- 1.4 Even though the site is a disused quarry, excavation works are still required for the levelling of the site at 93 m above sea level, the construction of the foundations and three basement levels. The excavation works are expected to generate 26,000 m³ of inert material. On the other hand, 8,000 m³ of the excavated inert material will be required on-site to backfill the central area, to raise this area to 93 m above sea level as well (see Figure 3). The PDS indicates that the material will be compacted to ensure that the backfilled areas are stable.
- 1.5 The excavation works are expected to be completed within 8 months, whereas the construction works will take between 4 to 5 years.

Table 1 – Breakdown of proposed uses and gross floor areas (*Source: PDS*)

Table 2 Proposed Land use		
Level	Description	Gross Floor Area - Sq mts
L-3	116 Garages, & 38 Parking Spaces	9,500
L-2	115 Garages & 38 Parking Spaces	9,500
L-1	115 Garages & 38 Parking Spaces	9,500
Block A	44 Residential Units	5,149
Block B	37 Residential Units	4,624
Block C	75 Residential Units	8,573
Block D	75 Residential Units	10,625
Block E	47 Residential Units	5,871
Total		63,342

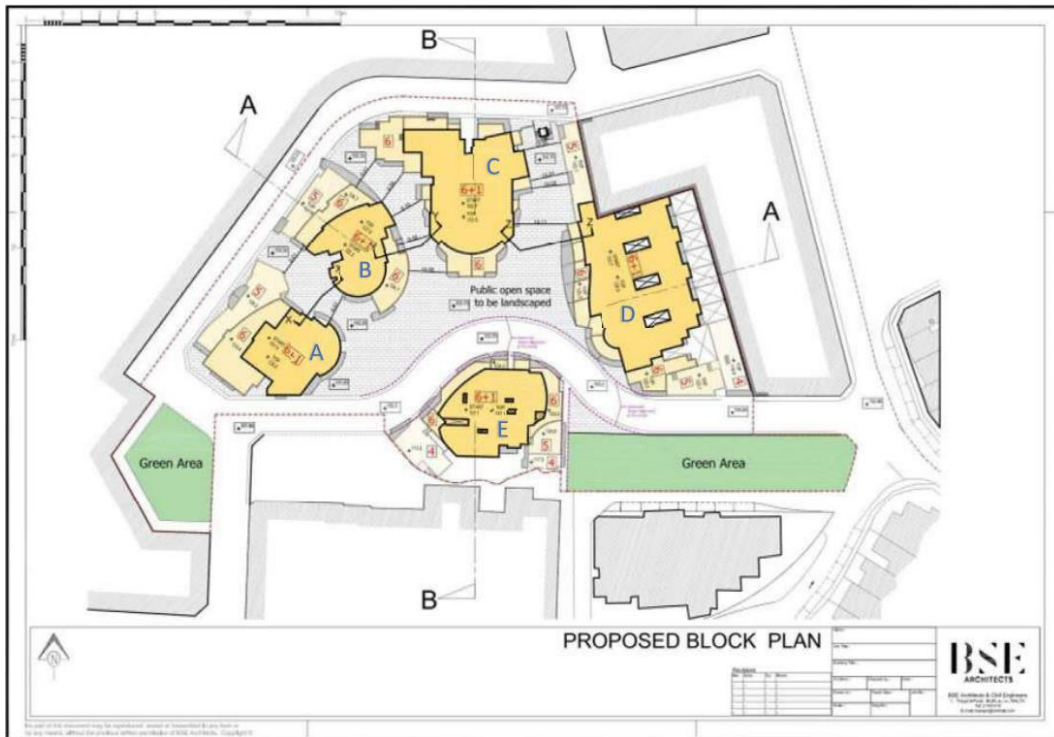


Figure 1 – Proposed block plan (Source: PDS)

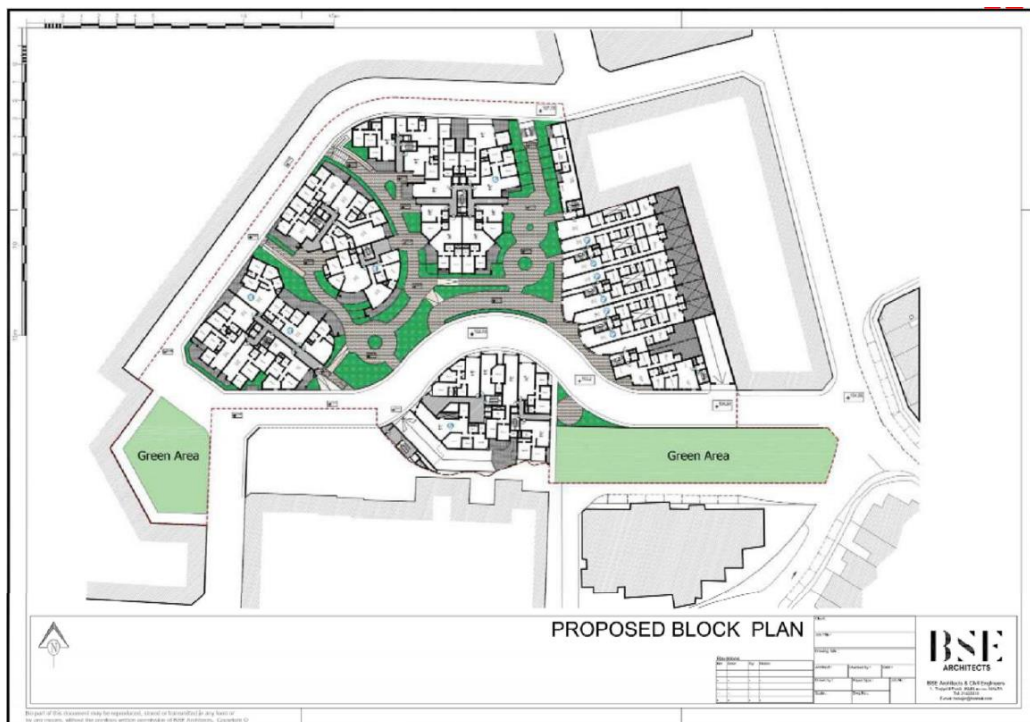


Figure 2 - Proposed block plan with landscaping (Source: PDS)

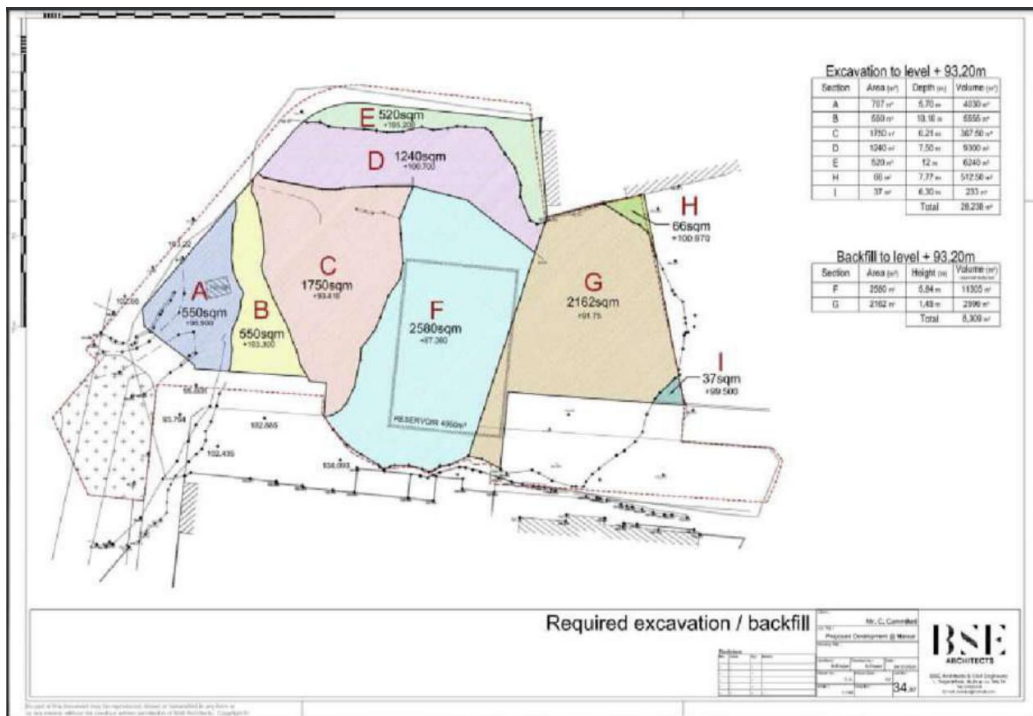


Figure 3 – Proposed excavation plan (Source: PDS)

2. Site context

2.1 The site is located within a disused quarry, with access from Triq Censu Muskat, Triq Manwel Magri and Triq il-Hawh. The site is located within the urban development zone of Naxxar and has a site area of 10,500 m². The proposed development will be contained entirely within the footprint of the disused quarry and will therefore not lead to fresh land take up (see Figures 4 and 5).

2.2 The surrounding land uses are predominantly residential, identical to the proposed uses on site (see Figure 6).

2.3 In view that quarrying operations on site ceased in the late 1970's, a vegetation cover has established over the years, with various shrubs and trees currently present on site (see Figure 5).

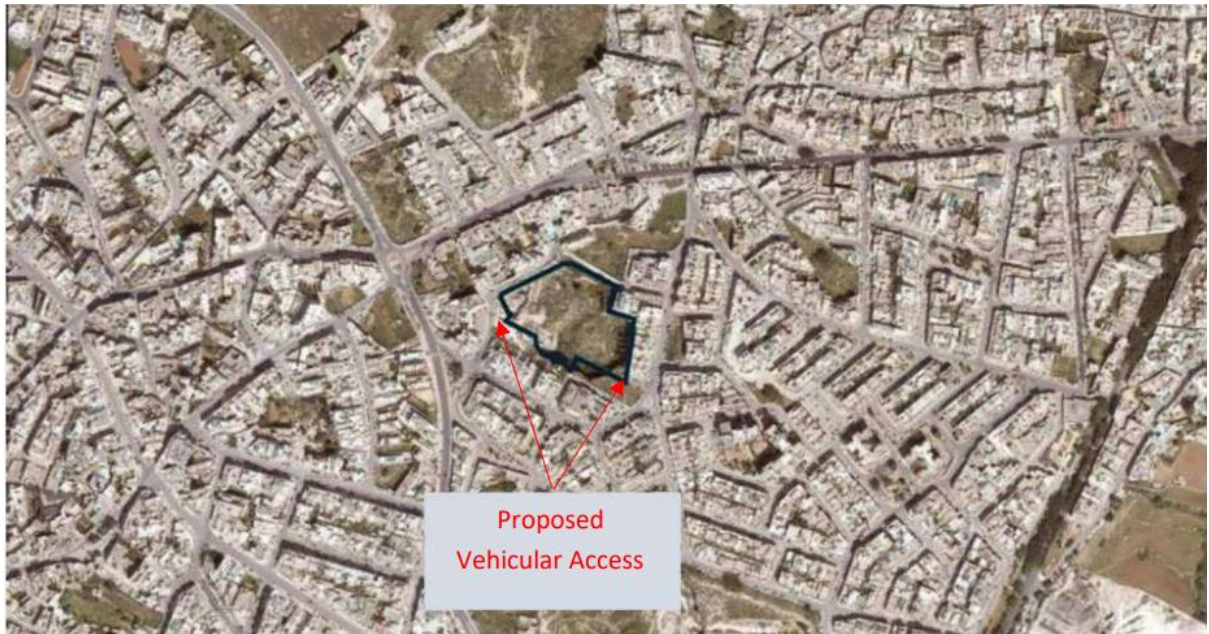


Figure 4 – Site of the proposed development (*Source: PDS*)

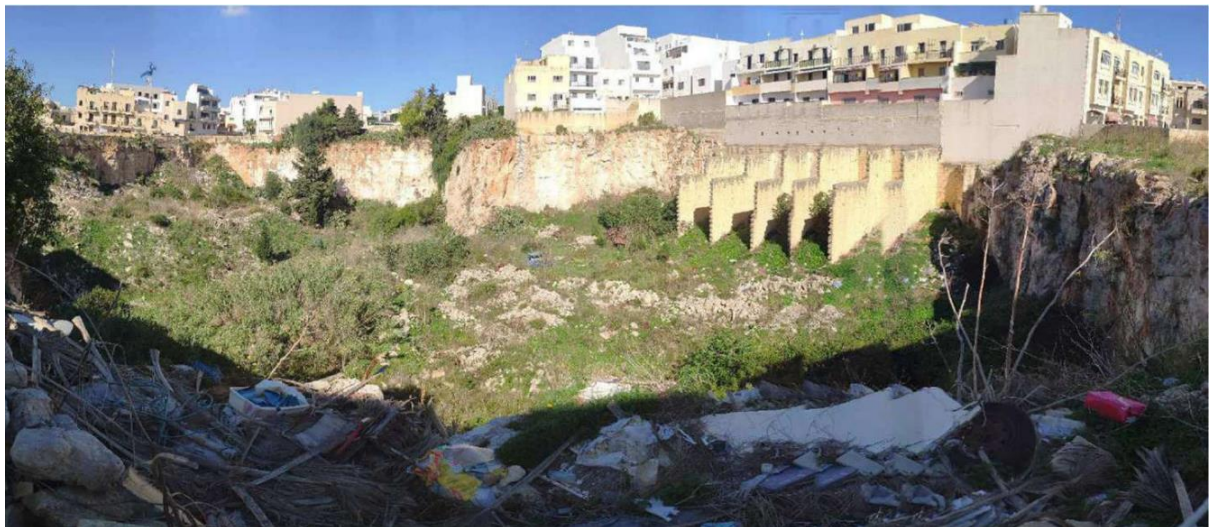


Figure 5 – Photograph of the site of the proposed development (*Source: PDS*)

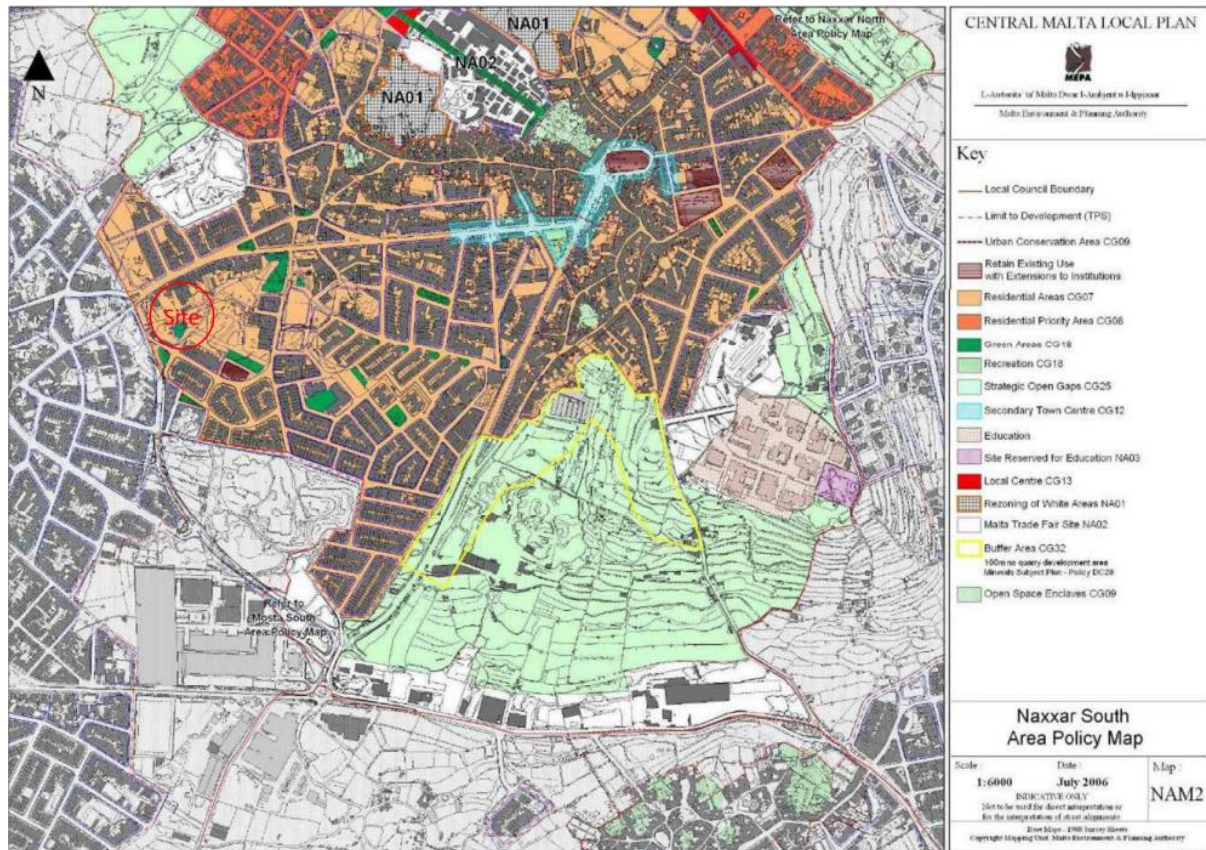


Figure 6 – Site marked in red on the Naxxar South Area Policy Map of the Central Malta Local Plan (Source: PDS)

3. Case history

3.1 An outline development permit for the construction of basement garages and overlying flats was granted by the then Malta Environment and Planning Authority by virtue of PA/02435/97. This proposal included a floorspace of maximum 31,000 m² above street level and 5,000 m² below street level. The current proposal, PA/03632/09, involves three basement levels with a gross floor area of 28,500 m² and five residential blocks with a total of 34,844 m². This translates into a total gross floor area of 63,342 m², which is an increase of 27,342 m² over and above what had been approved through PA/02435/97.

3.2 In addition, the following relevant planning control applications and enforcement notices were found:

Planning Control Applications:

- PC/00052/09 - To delete a proposed street and to deviate another proposed street. New Streets in Triq It-Tuffieħ and Triq Censu Muscat, Naxxar (Approved); and
- PC/00024/17 - Shifting of alignment. Site at Triq It-Tin, Naxxar. (Withdrawn).

Enforcement Notices:

- EC/00331/09 - Deposit of derelict vehicles/equipment, waste construction material, debris, scrap metal and other scrap material in unused quarry. Site off Triq Il- Langas &, Triq It-Tuffieh, Naxxar (Enforcement action suspended. Awaiting final determination of application).

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 the following Category II criteria in Schedule I: 13.0.2.1 (ii) *Any change to, or extension of, projects (even if the project is already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed), particularly projects covered by Category I or Category II, where the change or extension itself does not fall under Category I but may have significant adverse effects on the environment.* Therefore, the proposal was screened in terms of the EIA Regulations.

5. Documents used for screening

- ERA's previous correspondence, at document PA/03632/09 – 101a;
- Proposed plans and drawings, at documents PA/03632/09 - 126a-s;
- Project Description Statement (PDS) which was referred to ERA by the Planning Authority on 27 May 2021, at document PA/03632/09 – 126t;
- Waste Management Plan, which was referred to ERA by the Planning Authority on 27 May 2021, at document PA/03632/09 – 126u-y; and
- Photomontages, which were referred to ERA by the Planning Authority on 27 May 2021, at document PA/03632/09 – 126z.

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 and visual impact

6.1 The construction of a residential development, consisting of five apartment buildings, had already been approved through the outline development permit PA/02435/97. The current proposal under assessment involves a considerable increase in development below ground level, with the proposed construction of three basement levels (gross floor area of 28,500 m², compared to 5,000 m² approved in the said outline development permit). However, given that the proposal will be entirely contained within the footprint of the disused quarry, and noting that the increase in above-ground gross floor area is limited (3,844 m²; 34,844 m² - 31,000 m²), such intensification of use on site is not considered significant.

6.2 In terms of visual impact, ERA has noted that photomontages have been prepared by the project proponents, as per document PA/03632/09 – 126z on the EApps platform, which visualise the proposed development from both short and long-distance viewpoints. Whilst it can be observed that the development will be visible from certain viewpoints (Figure 7), noting the urban area it is situated in, no significant impacts on visual amenity are envisaged. Furthermore, ERA notes that the maximum height of the proposed development (six floors plus penthouse level) is as approved through the outline development permit PA/02435/97.



Figure 7a – Photomontage (viewpoint reference no. 1) (Source: EApps document PA/03632/09 – 126z)



Figure 7b – Photomontage (viewpoint reference no. 5) (Source: EApps document PA/03632/09 – 126z)

Construction-phase impacts

6.3 The proposal will generate fugitive dust, noise, vibration, and light emissions during the construction phases. Potential impacts arising during construction are temporary and can be minimised at source in line with the Environmental Management Construction Site Regulations (S.L. 552.09).

6.4 In terms of waste, given that the proposal is located within a disused quarry, which was subject to extraction of rock between the 1950's and the late 1970's, only partial excavations are required. In this regard, noting the nature and scale of the development, the generation of 26,000 m³ of inert material, of which 8,000 m³ will be reused on-site for infilling and levelling of the central area, is not considered significant, as long as any hazardous waste encountered during the course of the development is handled and monitored in accordance with the concurrent Waste Regulations (S.L. 549.63). Any type of hazardous waste is prohibited from being disposed of at the non-hazardous landfill in Malta. In addition, ERA requires further information with respect to the type of material presently found on site and the fate of such material once cleared prior to excavation works, and the fate of the material generated during the construction and finishing phases.

Operational impacts

6.5 The proposed development will attract vehicular traffic towards the site, however the extent of such increase is unclear. Therefore, in order to determine the need for any further investigations in terms of air quality and noise emissions, the expected increase in traffic flows in AADT value, as generated by the proposed development during operations, together with the current peak hourly traffic flows for the surrounding streets and the proposed peak hourly traffic flows as a result of the project.

6.6 In terms of light emissions, the illumination levels predicted in the proposed lighting scheme report (EApps document PA/03632/09 – 126a-c) are considered excessive and would need to be reduced. ERA requires that the maximum illumination levels do not exceed those in EN 13201-2 (European Standard), i.e. lighting levels shall not be higher than those of an S4 class (namely an average of 5 lux, 1 lux minimum maintained). Dimming of lights is also recommended, e.g. at 11p.m., when activity in the pedestrian areas is heavily reduced.

6.7 During operations, any waste generation will consist of common municipal waste, which is not considered to be significant as long as all the waste is managed in accordance with the Waste Management Regulations (S.L. 549.63), and efforts are done to recycle and reduce waste generation at source.

Energy and water use (recommendations)

6.8 Reducing energy demand has numerous environmental benefits. The ERA recommends that the design of the development takes into consideration sustainable measures such as:

- Skylights and large apertures, to provide additional natural light;
- 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;
- Double/Triple-glazed apertures and exterior facade/aperture shading, to reduce solar heat gain; and
- 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.

6.9 In general, ERA recommends the installation of energy-efficient luminaries/lighting systems as well as renewable energy. In this regard, plans to install Building Applied Photovoltaics (BAPVs) on roofs of the proposed building 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.

6.10 The ERA promotes the local application of EU projects such as the E2STORMED project which deals with the challenge of capturing and reusing storm-water runoff before it flows as surface water, by exploring Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), with the end goal of increasing energy efficiency. The information document published by ERA, 'Investing in the Multi-Functionality of Green Infrastructure (GI)' lists many other sustainable measures and projects. In this regard, it is highly recommended to adopt any relevant sustainable measures to the project.

Screening outcome

The above screening concludes that the proposal does not require an EIA in line with Regulation 15 of the EIA Regulations (S.L. 549.46). This is subject to the following further submissions/requirements:

1. The expected increase in traffic flows in AADT value, as generated by the proposed development during operations (as requested in doc 101A on EApps);
2. The current peak hourly traffic flows for the surrounding streets and the proposed peak hourly traffic flows as a result of the project;
3. The type of material presently found on site and the fate of such material once cleared prior to excavation works, and the fate of the material generated during the construction and finishing phases;
4. The inclusion of electric vehicle (EV) charging bays/facilities, bicycle racks and shelters, and motorcycle parking bays within the project plans wherever possible and practical; and
5. An amended lighting scheme report, with proposed lighting adhering to the maximum illumination levels established in EN 13201-2 (European Standard). Dimming of lights is also recommended, e.g. at 11p.m., when activity in the pedestrian areas is heavily reduced.

7. Environmental Permitting requirements

To determine whether an environmental permit is required, in accordance with the Trees and Woodlands Protection Regulations (S.L. 549.123), an updated block plan indicating all trees on site, including their scientific name and proposed interventions, is required.

III. ERA CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

Following screening of this proposal, ERA does not object to the proposal from an environmental point of view. No further assessment in terms of Regulation 15 of the EIA Regulations (S.L. 549.46) is required, subject that the aforementioned submissions/requirements are duly addressed and reflected in the project plans (in case of bullet point 4), and as long as the 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.

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.