

Environmental Impact Assessment

Screening according to Schedule III of S.L. 549.46

ERA Reference:	EA/00020/21
PA Reference no.:	PA/00650/20
Project Title:	Comprehensive development consisting of construction of 2x class 4C shops, 1x class 2C shop, 4x class 4A offices, 318 underground garages, 17 maisonettes, 80 apartments and 17 penthouses.
Location:	128, 122, 118, 116, Triq il-Qasam, 116 & vacant site Triq il-Qantar c/w, Triq S. Cannataci, Swieqi.
Screening date:	October 2021

I. BACKGROUND

1. Outline of Proposal

- 1.1 The proposed development involves an urban development of six storeys (as seen from Triq Il-Qasam), with a 167 m² office space and 103 residential units. The latter includes 16 one-bedroom apartments, 10 two-bedroom apartments and 77 three-bedroom apartments. Four basement levels are proposed, to cater for 328 garages/parking spaces. The proposed apartments amount to a gross floor area of 19,435 m², and the garages at basement level for 18,318 m². Therefore, the total gross floor area of the proposed development is 37,920 m², including the proposed shop (refer to Figure 1-3).
- 1.2 Access to the underground car parking will be from Triq S. Cannataci. At street level, cycle racks are proposed for use by visitors and employees, whilst in the basement 14 cycle racks have been included in the plans.
- 1.3 During operations, the proposed development will generate an increase in annual average daily traffic (AADT) of 785 vehicles. In terms of waste generation, assuming there will be 344 residents, approximately 234,000 kg of municipal waste will be generated.
- 1.4 For the implementation of the project, all vegetation on site would need to be removed. Existing trees include an almond tree, citrus trees, washingtonia palm trees, pine trees, a raffia palm tree, olive trees and ficus trees.

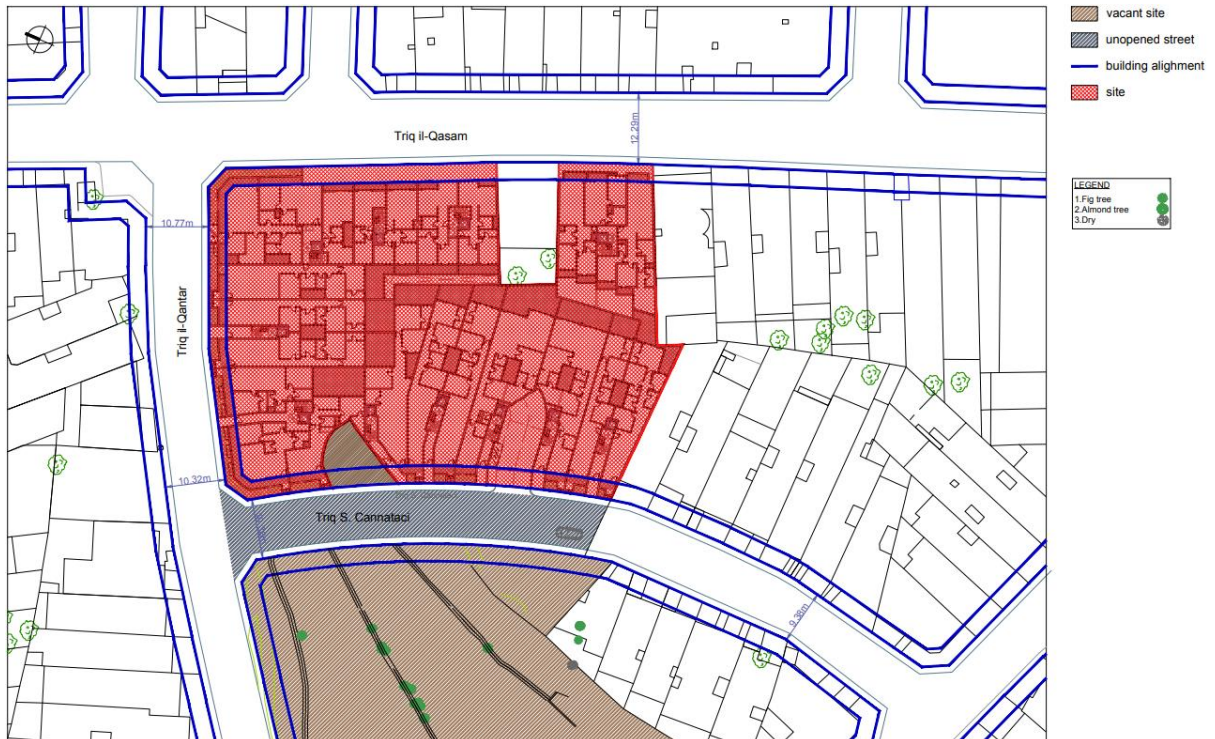


Figure 1: Proposed block plan (Source: EApps document PA/00650/20 – 129i)



Figure 2a: Proposed section A-A (Source: EApps document PA/00650/20 – 204c).

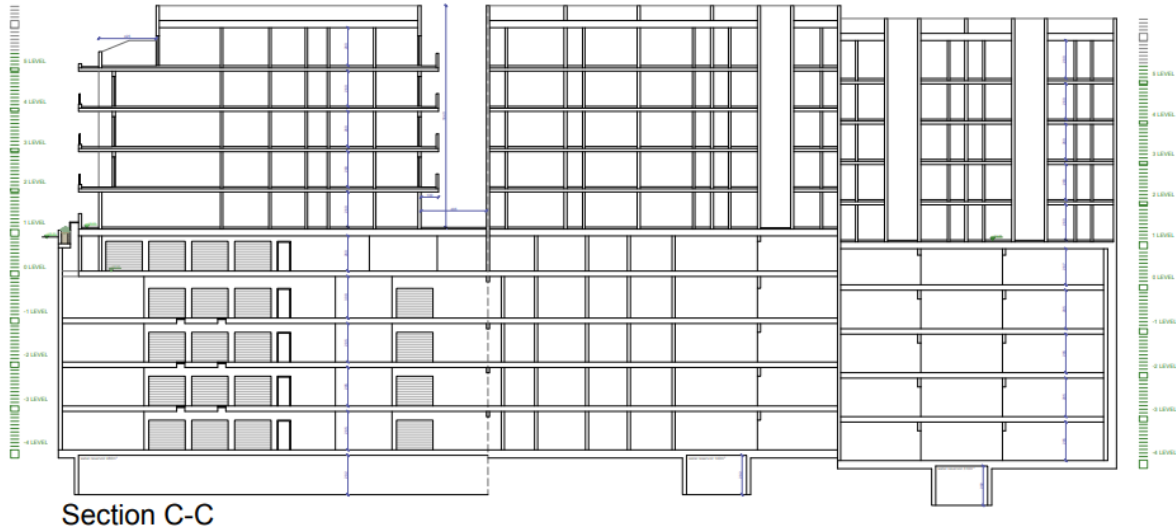


Figure 2b: Proposed section C-C (Source: EApps document PA/00650/20 – 204e).



Figure 3: Visuals of the proposal (Source: EApps document PA/00650/20 – 129j).

2. Site context

2.1 The site, which measures 3,861 m², is a corner site located along Triq il-Qasam, Triq Il-Qantar and Triq S. Cannataci, in Tal-Ibrag, Swieqi. The site is within the development zone (refer to Figure 4).

2.2 The eastern part of site currently consists of four terraced houses and a block with two apartments and underlying garages, totalling to a gross floor area of 3,430 m² (refer to Figure 5). The remainder of the site is natural land, with predominantly agricultural land, but also contains patches of garrigue and trees (refer to Figure 6). The surrounding land uses are predominantly residential, with mainly terraced houses, maisonettes, and apartments. Along Triq Il-Qasam commercial uses can be found street level with overlying residential properties. Beyond the western and southern edge of the site, more agricultural uses are present, with fields under cultivation (refer to Figure 7).

2.3 The nearest scheduled site is Wied Ghomor, being an Area of Ecological Importance / Site of Scientific Importance (scheduled through Govt. Notice 409/99), which is located 150m south of the site. However, noting the nature of the proposal and the distance from the said scheduled site, this designation is considered less relevant to this proposal. The site is also located outside of a Groundwater Safeguard Zone.

2.4 The site is designated for residential development, as per policy NHHO 01 and 02, of the North Harbours Local Plan, 2006 (refer to Figure 8).



Figure 4: Site of the proposal (Source: PDS)



Figure 5: Visuals of the existing situation (Source: PDS)



Figure 6: Existing vegetation on site (Source: PDS)

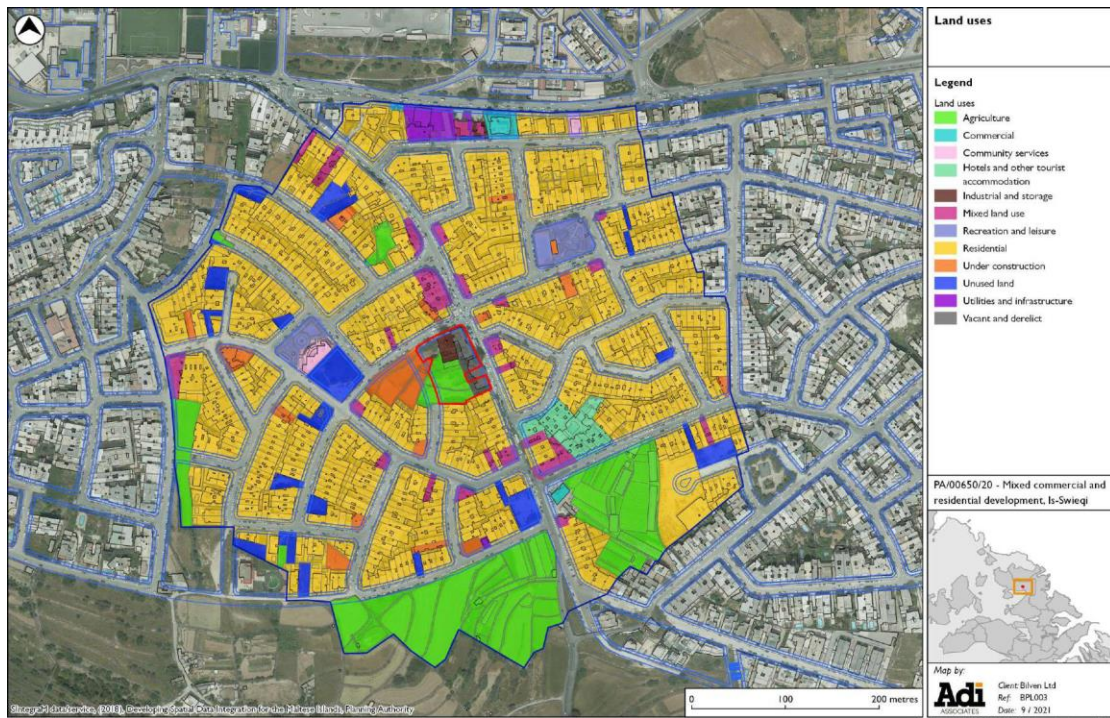


Figure 7: Land use map (Source: PDS)

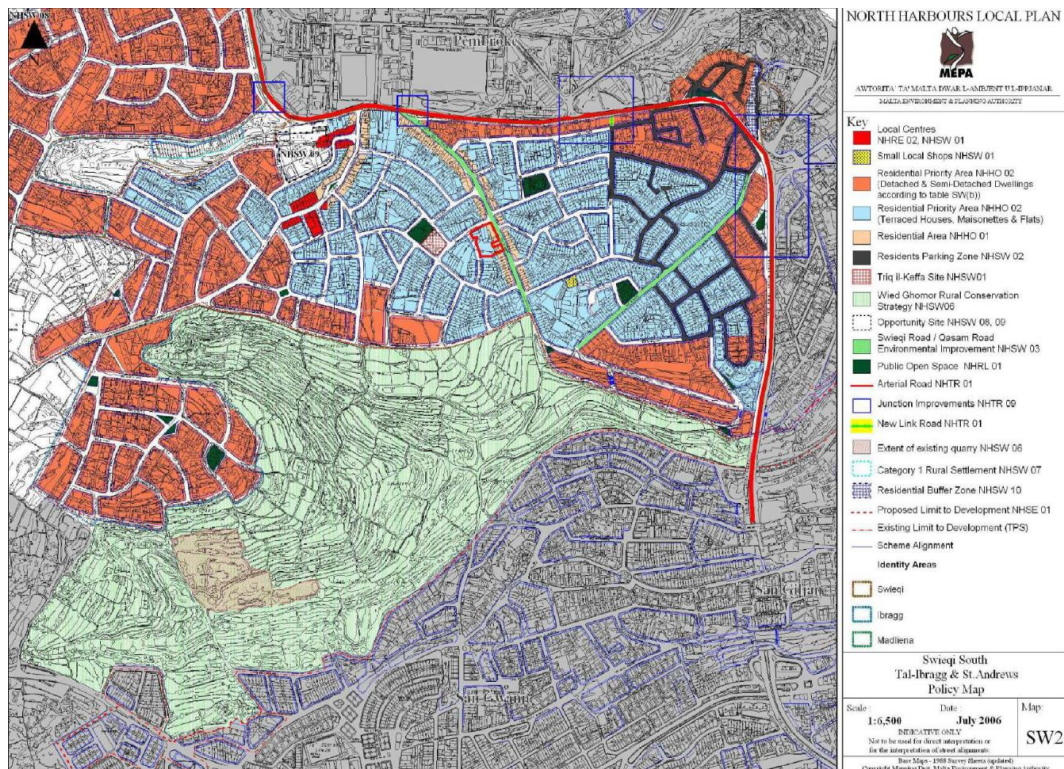


Figure 8: Swieqi South Policy Map, NHP 2006 (Source: PDS)

3. Case history

3.1 The case history of this site is limited to two enforcement notices, relating to the construction of two agricultural rooms without permit (EC/00494/99), and the change of use from vacant land to parking of heavy machinery, with associated dumping of material (EC/00623/07). Both cases have not yet been resolved, however, these appear to be linked to a minor part of the north-western portion of the site and are therefore not considered of relevance to this 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: 7.1.2.1 (ii): Projects which have a gross floor area of 30,000 m² or more. Therefore, the proposal was screened in terms of the EIA Regulations.

5. Documents used for screening

- ERA's previous correspondence, dated 14 December 2020, at document PA/00650/20 – 147a;
- Project Description Statement (PDS) which was referred to ERA by the Planning Authority on 16 September 2021, at document PA/00650/20 – 211a-b;
- Plans and drawings, at documents PA/00650/20 – 184 - 189 and 204; and
- Traffic Impact Assessment, at document PA/00650/20 – 219a.

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 proposal residential development (with an office at ground floor) is generally in line with the land uses present within the surrounding area and is according to the designated residential use outlined in the respective Local Plan policy (Swieqi South Policy Map, NHLP 2006). Therefore, no significant impacts in terms of land use are envisaged.

6.2 In terms of visual impact, whilst ERA notes that the height of the proposed development (six above-ground storeys – including receded penthouse level) exceeds the height of the surrounding buildings (predominantly terraced houses, maisonettes, and apartment buildings), no significant impacts are envisaged when considering its central location within the built-up urban area of Tal-Ibraġ.

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, noting the nature and scale of the development, the generation of 5,500 m³ of excavated inert material is not considered significant, as long as efforts are done to maximise reuse on site. With respect to demolition waste, ERA notes that waste streams EWC 01 04 07 and 01 04 10, as identified in Table 3 of the PDS, are not allowed to be used for backfilling purposes. In this regard, alternative disposal locations are to be determined for such waste materials, in line with the relevant regulations.

Operational impacts

6.5 The proposed development will attract vehicular traffic towards the site, with an expected increase in traffic flows (Annual Average Daily Traffic – AADT) of 785 vehicles per day. Such increase is not considered significant, and no further investigations are required in this regard.

6.6 With respect to noise generated by operational traffic, ERA notes that any increase in noise levels generated during operations will not be significant in view that there will be no doubling of the current traffic flows (reference is made to the Traffic Impact Assessment, at EApps doc PA/00650/20 – 219a). In this regard, no impacts in terms of operational noise are envisaged, subject that sustainable measures are included to promote alternative modes of traffic, i.e. the inclusion of electric vehicle (EV) charging bays/facilities, bicycle racks and shelters, and motorcycle parking bays within the project plans, where possible.

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 – sustainable measures

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.

III. ERA CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

The above screening has concluded that the environmental impacts of the proposed development are unlikely to be significant and thus, an EIA is not required in accordance with Regulation 15 of the EIA Regulations (S.L. 549.46). ERA does not object to this proposal from an environmental point of view, 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, and subject to the following:

- The inclusion of electric vehicle (EV) charging bays/facilities, bicycle racks and shelters, and motorcycle parking bays within the project plans, where possible;
- The adoption of sustainable measures to reduce energy and water use, as per ERA's recommendations outlined in section 6 above; and
- Alternative disposal locations are to be determined for waste streams EWC 01 04 07 and 01 04 10, in line with the relevant regulations, in view that such are not allowed to be used for backfilling purposes.

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.